# Examining Perceptions of Authenticity in Museum Exhibits about Skateboarding

Kevin Bicknell

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

University of Washington

2014

Committee:

Kristine Morrissey

Anita Verna Crofts

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:
Museology

©Copyright 2014
Kevin Bicknell

University of Washington

## Abstract

Examining Perceptions of Authenticity in Museum Exhibits About Skateboarding

Kevin W. Bicknell

Chair of Supervisory Committee:
Kristine Morrissey, Director
Museology

Skateboarding culture has received an increasing amount of attention in museum exhibits in recent years. However, the people tasked with creating such exhibits often have little connection to the skateboarding community. As museums expand the scope of their exhibitions and strive to engage new audiences, they will inevitably encounter communities similar to the skateboarding community, in which members and non-members have different perceptions of what is authentic and what is not. Understanding how such communities construct authenticity will be invaluable in creating exhibits that appeal to both the communities at hand and the general public. If done correctly, such exhibits have the potential to engage new audiences and help inform the public opinion of often misrepresented communities.

This study asked seven skateboarders to examine exhibit labels and artifacts from four different museum exhibits and decide which told an authentic story,

which told an inauthentic story, and which they were unsure about. The results suggest that a demonstration of knowledge about skateboarding, the theme and language used in exhibit labels, and the perceived intentions of both the museum and those whose stories are being told in the exhibit are key contributors to perceptions of authenticity. Museums can use the methodology and results presented here to inform the object selection, narrative construction, and language used in future exhibits about skateboarding.

*Keywords:* Skateboarding, Authenticity, Museum, Exhibit, Subculture

## Contents


**Chapter I: Introduction** **1**

**Chapter II: Literature Review** **4**

Defining Authenticity 4
Establishing Authority 9
Subcultural Membership 11
Defining Subcultures 11
Establishing and Maintaining Membership 13
Knowledge 13
Longevity 15
Being vs. Doing 15
Appearance and Commercial Associations 17
Issues 19
Authenticity in Museum Exhibits 20
Research 20
Community Voices 21
New and Compelling Stories 24
Authentic Use of Objects and Collections 25

**Chapter III: Methods** **28**
Participants 28
Instrument 30
Analysis 33

**Chapter IV: Results** **34**
Defining Authenticity 35
Exhibit Labels 38
Exhibit Objects 44
Authentic Objects 44
Inauthentic Objects 57
Outlier 63
Limitations 66

**Chapter V: Conclusion** **68**

References 73

Appendix A 76
Appendix B 82
Appendix C 94

## Chapter I: Introduction

On April 2, 2014, an article was published on the website of the popular UK news source, *The Guardian*, entitled, "How Old is Too Old to Skateboard?" Author Lee Coan (2014) described a man he sees every day that drops his child off at school, then skateboards home. The author spends the majority of the article berating the man, and in turn criticizing people over a certain age that choose to ride skateboards, referring to them as "wrong" and "ridiculous" (p. 1). Within the first week of its publication, the article drew over 100 comments, nearly all of which came from skateboarders who opposed Coan's views.

Coan's article, and the backlash it generated, was not an isolated incident. From the articles in *Life Magazine* in the 1960s, to the introduction and exponential growth of the X-Games in the 1990s, to the arena-filling Street League series, mainstream media has progressively taken an interest in skateboarding throughout the course of its history. Periodically, articles like Coan's that offer non-skateboarders' perceptions of the culture have induced a collective groan of disapproval from the skateboarding community. In the fall of 2012, a piece entitled "5 Embarrassing Articles Written About Skateboarding by Non-Skaters" appeared on the site of *Jenkem Magazine*, an online skateboarding publication. In the article, author James Lee (2012) discussed articles that, like Coan's, offered drastically different understandings of skateboarding than those likely to be presented by skateboarders themselves. In one of these articles, titled "If You Like to Skateboard, I Hope You Never Have Children," the author takes a malicious approach to the subject, saying things like "There are too many tight pants wearing, world hating,

spoiled skateboarding idiots today" (Pareso, 2009, p. 1). The article drew such an aggressive opposition that the author was forced to write an apology, equating the incident to a misunderstood joke.

Regardless of one's opinion on the culture, there is no denying that skateboarders and non-skateboarders often have conflicting opinions of the skateboarding community. This is problematic. As skateboarding becomes a topic of discussion more frequently outside of its own community, the general public may not be receiving information that is accurate or aligned with skateboarders' perceptions of themselves.

The topic of skateboarding has received an increasing amount of attention in museum exhibits in the past several years. Institutions like the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, The Exploratorium, and the National Museum of the American Indian, to name a few, have all touched on the subject in some way. However, little scholarly research has been done on such exhibitions. Given the disparity in opinions surrounding the subject of skateboarding, information about perceptions of authenticity in skateboarding-related exhibits could potentially aid museum professionals planning to undertake projects that feature similar communities of affinity with deep subcultural histories and identities.

The purpose of this study is to answer the question, what elements of museum exhibits about skateboarding do skateboarders perceive to be authentic? The study aims to identify trends that can help museum professionals gain a better understanding of who within the skateboarding community to reach out to, whose stories to tell, what themes and language to employ in narratives, and ultimately,

how to tell a story that feels authentic to a community that is outside their experience.

The problems addressed herein are not only relevant to the discussion of museum exhibits about skateboarding. In their article, "Museums & Authenticity," James H. Gilmore and Joseph B. Pine (2007) stress the importance of understanding authenticity in the context of all exhibits. The authors go so far as to argue that within museums, "The #1 challenge today is the *management of the customer perception of authenticity*" (p. 76). In working to ensure authenticity in exhibits about skateboarding and similar communities, museums have the potential to address the disconnect between skateboarders and non-skateboarders, and affect each group's perceptions of the culture in a way that fosters greater inclusion and understanding. In her book The Social Work of Museums, author Lois Silverman (2010) champions this notion and warns against the repercussions of inauthenticity. "From advertisements to art to museum displays, all media have the potential to reflect as well as influence societal attitudes towards groups. Unfortunately, some portrayals contribute to stereotypes, fixed simplification of groups that often fuel prejudice, stigma, and oppression" (p. 131).

As museums expand the scope of their exhibitions and strive to engage new audiences, they will inevitably encounter communities similar to the skateboarding community, in which members and non-members have different perceptions of what is authentic and what is not. Understanding how such communities construct authenticity will be invaluable in creating exhibits that appeal to both the communities at hand and the general public.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

Little research has been done on the skateboard community within the realm of museological study. However, the topic of authenticity is one that has been considered in great depth in regards to similar cultural communities, both inside and outside of museum studies. As a result, it is reasonable to examine the literature surrounding the issue of authenticity as it has been written about how museums go about creating authentic experiences, and to also refer to studies conducted from other fields on often misunderstood or misrepresented cultures.

### Defining Authenticity

Authenticity, in its most theoretical form, has been discussed by philosophers for centuries. In more recent years, German philosopher, Hanno Hardt (1993), approached authenticity in his article, "Authenticity, Communication, and Critical Theory." He speaks largely of the ambiguity of the term noting that

> The question of authenticity is caught up in the specter of a personalized environment in which language and communication reflect a culture of domination, assigned to express involvement or participation and status or prestige in the course of individual recognition through group identification. (p. 53)

Hardt points out that authenticity itself is a subjective term, relying heavily on factors of language, involvement, status, and identity. His discussion lays a foundation upon which the rest of the literature assessed here builds, and provides an essential understanding of the difficulty of assigning one definition to the term.

The notion of subjectivity is one that has been stressed by other scholars outside of the field of philosophical study. In her article, "Negotiating Subcultural Authenticity Through Interpretation of Mainstream Advertising," author Ilona Mikkonen (2010) discussed the difficulty inherent in trying to assign one definition to the term. She describes authenticity as "a problematic concept, reflecting extreme complexity of interacting phenomena involving cultural contact, issues of identity appropriation and commodification, and dialectic tensions of tradition and change, as well as self and cultural Other" (p. 305). Though the author does not attempt to create a single definition for the term, her statement does note several criteria that influence the construction of authenticity. The notion of authenticity as a construct, reliant heavily on a number of complex factors such as those listed by Mikkonen, is one shared by a number of scholars on the subject. In his article "Memory, Mythmaking and Museums: Constructive Authenticity and the Primitive Blues Subject," author Stephen A. King (2005) also notes the constructive element of authenticity, arguing that, "all authenticity, in one form or another, is a constructed, rhetorical phenomenon" (p. 237), and going so far as to say "absolute, genuine, 'true' authenticity does not exist" (p. 237).

Sociologist David J. Hutson (2010) offers additional characteristics that contribute to the construction of authenticity in his article, "Standing OUT/Fitting IN: Identity, Appearance and Authenticity in Gay and Lesbian Communities." The author cites "sincerity, truthfulness, originality, and the feeling and practice of being true to oneself" (p. 217) as key elements comprising an individual's perception of authenticity. James H. Gilmore and Joseph B. Pine (2007) share this sentiment

specifically in regards to museum practice, citing "being true to one's own self" (p. 79) as a key dimension in a museum's construction of authentic experiences.

The idea presented by King (2005) that the setting of an event is paramount in the determination of authenticity is one that is touched upon by a number of scholars. In their article, "Locating Authenticity: Fragments of a Dialogue," Spencer R. Crew and James E. Sims (1991) focus heavily on setting. "It is the event that is primary, not the things or even our directed thoughts about them. And it is in the place/time of the event that the audience takes part, becoming cocreators of social meaning. Authenticity is located in the event" (p. 174). Echoing the importance of setting in the construction of authenticity, Crew and Sims bring up an additional concept that is common in the literature surrounding the term.

Many professionals agree that authenticity relies heavily on elements of social interactions. Hutson (2010) acknowledges the personal elements present in the construction of authenticity, but places greater emphasis on the social aspect. He notes that the concept can be viewed as "a commitment to self-values" (p. 217), but goes on to add that these self-values "operate like a core around which ideals may shift because of the social situation" (p. 217). With this statement, Hutson provides support for three of the elements that have previously been discussed: self values, social interaction, and setting. In this sense, he describes the construction of authenticity as not exclusive to one element, but reliant on a set of constantly shifting variables.

The notion that social interactions play a significant role in the determination of authenticity is elaborated upon by King (2005), who asserts that "authenticity is

actually a shared set of beliefs about the nature of things we value in the world, that are typically reinforced by the conscious efforts of cultural producers and consumers alike" (p. 241). In this discussion, King implies that one's own values and perceptions are explicitly linked to their position within social situations. He goes on to note that this fact can often be problematic, arguing that "even alternative and contradictory depictions of authenticity are idealized representations(s) of reality, and, thus act as a set of expectations regarding how such a thing ought to look, sound, and feel (p. 241).

The notion that authenticity relies heavily on a desire for something to fit within a predetermined set of parameters is echoed by Crew and Sims (1991), who quote scholar, David Loewenthal in saying "The ultimate uncertainty of the past makes us all the more anxious to validate that things were as reputed. To gain assurance that yesterday was as substantial as today we saturate ourselves with bygone reliquary details, reaffirming memory and history in tangible format" (p. 161). Mikkonen (2010) offers this take on the subject as well, arguing that authenticity "is always contextual and socially negotiated, and thus its contents and boundaries are constructed collaboratively within social groups" (p. 306). She wraps up her argument by saying, "authenticity is a claim that is made by or for someone or something and is either accepted or rejected by relevant others" (Mikkonen, p. 306).

The idea that Mikkonen (2010) mentions, in which authenticity is a claim to be accepted or rejected by a community, is elaborated upon as she continues her discussion of the role of authenticity in subculture communities. She states,

"*Subcultural authenticity* is conceptualised as possession and demonstration of (sub)cultural capital, or knowledge of what is accepted as genuine within the subculture" (p. 306). In this sense, the author argues that in order for a community member to be considered authentic, they require a keen knowledge of the subculture to which they belong. Mikkonen acknowledges however, that there may not be a fixed definition of what is considered genuine within a subculture, and goes on to say, "the representation has to be perceived at least iconically accurate by the members of the subculture being represented" (p. 307). This refers once again to the truly subjective nature of the term, in which fluctuating variables determine authenticity within a given community.

Crew and Sims (1991) sum up the discussion of authenticity as a subjective concept. They argue that authenticity, at its most basic level, is reliant on the opinions of those whose opinions matter within a group. They note that

> authenticity is not about factuality or reality. It is about authority. Objects have no authority; people do. It is people on the exhibition team who must make a judgment about how to tell about the past. Authenticity – authority – enforces the social contract between the audience and the museum, a socially agreed-upon reality that exists only as long as confidence in the voice of the exhibition holds (p. 163).

Accordingly, the concept of authority becomes essential in the discussion of authenticity and how it is rendered.

**Establishing Authority**

The literature thus far has established authority as an essential component when considering the concept of authenticity. In their article, "Authentic Subcultural Membership: Antecedents and Consequences of Authenticating Acts and Authoritative Performances," authors Michael B. Beverland, Francis Farrely, and Pascale G. Quester (2010), define authority in simple terms, stating, "Authority concerns the issue of who determines authenticity within the community" (p. 701). This statement, like the one made by Crew and Sims (1991), ties the concept of authority directly to that of authenticity, setting up a paradigm in which one cannot exist without the other.

In his discussion of the concept of authority within the realm of journalism, C.W. Anderson (2007) describes the term as "a cultural form of power" (Anderson, p. 6), and furthermore as something "considered largely legitimate by those who both exercise and are subject to it" (p. 6). Speaking also of the realm of journalism in his article, "Biased Press or Biased Public?: Attitudes Toward Media Coverage of Social Groups," author Albert C. Gunther (1992) discusses the term credibility, using it almost as a synonym for authority. He defines credibility in terms reminiscent of Crew, Sims (1991) and Mikkonen's (2010) definitions of authenticity, arguing that the concept is not "an objective property of the source" (Gunther, p. 148), but rather "a receiver perception" (Gunther, p. 148).

Continuing his discussion of credibility, Gunther (1992) cites "involvement" (p. 161) as a precursor to credibility. This begins an important conversation about how a community member, journalist, or media outlet, can gain authority over time.

Beverland, Farrely, and Quester (2010) share this view in their discussion of status within subcultural communities, stating, "greater status is attributed to subcultural members who have more experience and expertise. Thus, members gain authenticity as they effectively earn their stripes through a process of enculturation" (p. 700).

In his discussion of Holocaust writing, scholar Eyal Zandberg (2010) provides greater evidence to support the idea that authority within a community is gained over time. He mentions holocaust writer, Noah Kliger, saying "He started by writing memoirs about his personal experiences during the Holocaust. Over the years, his authority strengthened so that he attained recognition as an authority who can write about the Warsaw Ghetto uprising as well as about the Jews in Tunisia during the Second World War" (Zandberg, p. 16). He goes on to comment, "The mixture of the professional and the biographic sources of authority, together with his longevity and seniority of 50 years in journalism, have given him the special status of 'Holocaust journalist' who can write beyond his personal experience" (Zandberg, 2010, p. 16). This presents the idea that once an individual achieves a position of authority, in many cases as a result of decades of involvement within a community, they may comment on all aspects of a community's story, not just those where they have direct involvement.

Beverland, Francis, and Quester (2010) note that one can work toward an authoritative status within a group by partaking in acts that affirm their position, referring to such an act as "an authoritative performance" (p. 701). They argue that, "Such acts aim at affirming the individual's desired social identity and may involve

public displays, including the adoption of fashion and language from a subculture" (p. 701). Authoritative performances, however, must be carried properly in the eyes of a subcultural group in order to be effective.

In his examination of the "hardcore" music scene on Australia's Gold Coast, author Christopher Driver (2011) notes that knowledge and performance are still not always enough to position someone as an authority within a community. To put this into perspective, he mentions characteristics of those not seen as authorities. He describes these people as "any participant who consumes for the sake of narrative, thus lacking the embodied powers of perception and action necessary to simply be hardcore in their subjective interactions with the world" (p. 986). Through this statement, Driver brings up the important notion that an individual must be seen as an authentic member of a community before authoritative acts can have a positive effect. Thus, in order to fully understand how authority status is achieved, it is necessary to examine how individuals become and remain members of cultural or subcultural communities.

## Subcultural Membership

### Defining Subcultures

The first question that inevitably arises when discussing a subculture, is what is a subculture? Mikkonen (2010) takes a conceptual approach to the definition of the term subculture, describing subcultural communities as "social subsets of individuals that are bound together by common activities, a unique life philosophy and/or outlook that originate in cultural, historical and social influences" (p. 305).

This definition describes subcultures as communities that are not only bound by common interest, but also a common view the world.

Gunther (1992) describes these groups in a similar manner, offering the examples of "political, religious, (and) ethnic" groups that share "attitudes, beliefs, and a personal stake in group conflict" (p. 152). However, Beverland, Farrely, and Quester (2010) argue that subculture communities "have an oppositional nature" (p. 702), which implies that groups in which there is a standardized process for becoming a member may not share the same characteristics of those that take a more nuanced approach to membership.

Beverland, Farrely, and Quester (2010) speak to the difficulties of defining subcultural groups in their article, explaining some of the flawed thinking that has been historically associated with studying subcultural membership. They argue that "subcultures are complex domains where multiple values both coexist and are contested" (p. 713), bringing light to the fact that it would be erroneous to generalize any subcultural community as a whole. They also explain that, "subcultures often consist of debates about authenticity of membership, in an out groups, and contests over the meaning of authoritative texts" (p. 699), stressing the importance of studying such issues. Additionally, they argue that, "unpacking these differences will present a richer understanding of subcultures and communities" (p, 699), concluding, "subcultural debates about authenticity are dynamic, nuanced, and involve the creation and re-creation of subcultural history" (p. 713).

### Establishing and Maintaining Membership

In order to understand how museums can better approach the creation of authentic exhibits about certain communities, it is important to recognize the ways that such communities establish and maintain membership. While some people are born into a certain culture, others adopt the identity associated with a community or subculture. Regardless of whether an individual is born into a culture or chooses to join a subculture, it is important to note how both types of groups define authentic membership.

### Knowledge

Many sources discussing cultural and subcultural community membership cite the possession of a certain amount of knowledge as a primary factor in gaining acceptance and forming both individual and collective identities. However, it is apparent in the sources discussed here that it is not the possession of knowledge, but rather the way that knowledge is put into action, that signifies authenticity. In his discussion of his research, Driver (2011) explains this concept eloquently. "My participants are not talking here about a competence in the expression of subcultural knowledge, but of the embodiment of knowledge in-context – an affective attunement to hardcore that predisposes the actor to perform the appropriate 'moves'"(p. 981). His statement proposes the idea that not only must members of Australia's Gold Coast Hardcore scene possess certain competencies, but his use of the term "embodies" asserts that these competencies must be displayed in a way that demonstrates a natural attunement to cultural ideals and practices.

Mikkonen (2010) agrees with Driver (2011) on this point, describing the authentic embodiment of cultural knowledge as "more than merely being able to identify, and then utilise, certain cues or symbolism in advertisements. It fundamentally involves understanding the particular mechanisms by which meanings are constructed within a subculture, and comprehending meanings and symbolism in their historical and social contexts" (Mikkonen, p. 322). In this statement, Mikkonen emphasizes the importance of having adequate historical knowledge of a given community, coupled with the ability to pick up on cues in social contexts. She summarizes her argument, referring to this phenomenon as "a kind of 'mutual understanding' between homosexual women" (p. 320).

In his examination of the ways in which language affect the formation of cultural communities, entitled Linguistic Anthropology, author Alessandro Duranti (1997) offers a similar take on the requirement of more than just factual knowledge. He speaks broadly on the concept of culture, noting,

> If culture is learned, then much of it can be thought of in terms of knowledge of the world. This does not only mean the members of a culture must know certain facts or be able to recognize objects, places, and people. It also means that they must share certain patterns of thought, ways of understanding the world, making inferences and predictions (p. 27).

All three authors agree that an embodiment of cultural knowledge, rather than the simple possession or understanding of it, is paramount in deciphering between authentic and inauthentic cultural membership.

**Longevity**

Beverland, Farrely, and Quester (2010) touch upon the idea that long-term involvement with a culture helps to build the perception of authenticity in the eyes of the surrounding community.

> Research reveals that authenticity is unlikely to be attributed to the 'new.' New members of subcultures often suffer a liability of newness in that they have not yet demonstrated their commitment, and because of the ever-present concern that they will drop the community once fashions change, unlike those that live the subculture (p. 701).

Similarly, they speak specifically of a handful of communities, stating, "newer punks, hippies, or Goths were likely to be seen as 'doing' authenticity because they had yet to pay their dues, or because their youth meant they had no relationship with the key foundation events (e.g., 1976 and punk, Woodstock and hippies)" (pp. 700-701).

**Section V: Being vs. Doing**

Taking into consideration the element of longevity discussed by Beverland, Farrely, and Quester (2010), many scholars suggest that an essential element in the construction of authentic membership is the ability to identify those who may be new to a culture, or who lack the previously noted embodiment of cultural ideals. Mikkonen (2010) refers to this as "'Othering,' or creating a mental distance between the ingroup and outgroup" (p. 318). In her discussion of this concept, she notes that often an essential part of defining authentic membership is establishing the qualities of those who are not members. She notes that amongst participants in her study, a recurring trend was the "conceptualisation of 'our world', an expression that implies

a restricted, private community" (p. 322). In discussing the exclusive elements of authentic cultural membership, Mikkonen explains the conceptualization of members versus nonmembers through the notion of "being rather than doing" (p. 317). She argues that a feeling of "being," which is the characteristic associated with authentic membership, is an essential element of forming one's identity within the context of a cultural community. Beverland, Farrely, and Quester (2010) also use the "being vs. doing" terminology, explaining that "'doing' and 'being' represent different ways by which consumers self-authenticate" (p. 712). In this statement, the authors shed light on the idea that "being" is a way for individuals to establish their personal identities as well as prove their membership to other group members.

The statement by Berverland, Farrely, and Quester (2010) adds weight to the argument that authentic cultural membership requires more than simple knowledge of a subject. The authors stress the distinction, noting, "This gap is important because new members may be sincere in motive and genuinely believe they are 'being' authentic even though they may adopt brands and behaviors rejected by more experienced members" (p. 701). Such an argument speaks to the exclusive nature of many cultures in which the pure desire to be part of the community will not satisfy those who consider themselves to be, and are considered by others, as "being" authentic community members. Without such longevity and continued demonstration of the embodiment of core values, Beverland, Farrely, and Quester argue that the "being" members of a community may question the motives of a new

member. They comment, "Debates about 'being versus doing' relate to sincerity of motive, which is often equated with authenticity" (p. 700).

Here, the authors add a new element to the discussion of authentic cultural membership with the notion of sincerity of motive as essential to authenticity. They speak to the skepticism of in-members, noting that those perceived as "doing" authenticity are seen as "insincerely putting on a front (e.g., looking like a punk) in order to look the part" (p. 700).

### Appearance and Commercial Associations

Many scholars argue that alongside the initial embodiment of core values necessary in defining an individual as a core member of a community, comes a certain outlook on personal characteristics such as appearance and worldview. The literature suggests that not only does being an authentic member of a culture affect member's actions and attitudes within the context of the social group, but in their personal lives as well. Hutson (2010) discusses how personal appearance often coincides with one's position in a cultural community. "Appearance acts as a prediscursive form of interaction, one that allows interactants to ascertain the identities of participants, the relative social values attached to their positions, their moods, and their attitudes or possible courses of action" (p. 215). With this statement, he makes the claim that appearance contributes to the way group members perceive others. It is likely in this regard, that appearance has the ability to denote those seen as "being" from those seen as "doing." Mikkonen (2010) adds that appearance not only comes into play when viewing others, but also cites

"defining proper lesbian look" (p. 303) as a process through which "lesbian authority" (p. 303) is created.

Some scholars noted that a strict adherence to a certain style or dress code could signify inauthenticity. Though a certain look was acknowledged in his research, Driver (2011) made note that "young people I interviewed were reluctant to make any comments at all regarding style in terms of subcultural fashion, instead preferring to concentrate on more behavioral aspects of doing hardcore; emphasizing a kind of competence in practice rather than competence in matters of semiotics" (p. 980). Once more, the being versus doing concept is employed. Beverland, Farrely, and Quester (2010) provide support to this notion, saying, "Research on authenticity in subcultures often describes the motives of those 'doing' authenticity as being fashion oriented or superficial" (p. 712).

The mention of superficiality draws a link back to the notion of sincerity of intention, which was cited as an essential, but not all encompassing, characteristic of the authentic cultural member. The authors build upon this idea by discussing issues of authenticity within the self-taught art community. They state, "members who embrace market mechanisms lost integrity and authenticity. In the same vein, actions perceived as 'selling out' or breaking the utopian norms of a community result in a loss of authenticity" (Beverland et al., 2010, p. 700). Here, the literature suggests once again that a certain investment to the culture must be made, in which one seeking membership must devote their entire being to the core values of the community they wish to be part of, rather than simply obtaining relevant knowledge.

**Issues**

Thus far the literature has suggested that to uphold the perception of authentic cultural membership, one must embody a responsive and constantly evolving ethos deemed in accordance to the core values of the community. Therefore, it is not surprising that scholars on the subject make note of the problematic elements of such a system. Beverland, Farrely, and Quester (2010) suggest that cultures rely on a fine balance between individual and community identity. They state, "communities can break down when individuals use them to satisfy self –relevant goals alone, while emphasis solely on communal norms can potentially lead to individuals losing interest and exiting" (p. 699).

Additionally, in his article, "Behind the Scenes: Museums and Selective Criticism," Brian Durrans (1994) notes that subcultural communities, into which members are not born but rather associate with on an ideological level, are not entirely homogenous, and therefore membership is often diverse even amongst core members. He argues, "competition between communities for control over meanings is complicated by the division of those communities along class lines" (p. 4). Given the complications of the varying degrees of membership, it is not difficult to imagine why the tendency to try to generalize cultural and subcultural groups is so prevalent. Driver discusses the negative implications of such generalizations.

> The fundamental shift here is clearly rooted in a wider sociological debate regarding structure and agency. But it is organized around a focus upon meaning and representation that holds 'authentic' subcultural attachment as either so rigidly defined that the well-demonstrated movements through and

> between the groupings themselves cannot be sufficiently accounted for, or as so loosely articulated that there is really nothing of 'substance' to explain their lasting form and coherence (p. 978).

The analysis set forth by these scholars could potentially account for the lack of literature specifically focusing on skateboarding culture, and could explain why until recently, the subject of skateboarding has been overlooked by museums and other educational institutions.

## Authenticity in Museum Exhibits

There is little literature focusing specifically on the skateboarding community's representation in museum exhibits. However, the question of how to tell authentic stories of cultural and subcultural communities in museum exhibits has been explored in great depth. Gilmore and Pine (2007) break down the process of constructing authentic exhibits into three distinct fields upon which museums should focus their energies. According to the authors, "There are three primary levels to consider in thinking about museums and authenticity: artifacts, edifices, and encounters" (p. 78). The findings of the rest of the literature discussed here fall roughly into these three categories, and include a few additional approaches as well.

### Research

In order to ensure authentic stories are told in all three of these realms, however, many scholars argue that museum professionals must begin by doing their proverbial homework. In other words, the literature as a whole implies that an

effective and authentic exhibit begins with quality research. Crew and Sims (1991) argue that through conducting research, a research team must achieve a certain level of expertise on a subject, which they deem," an important tool in the construction of the exhibition" (p. 170). They go on to add, in turn, that in order to reach the level of expertise essential to the construction of an authentic exhibition, researchers "must extend beyond exploring the standard secondary sources. Primary sources must be reviewed to determine if, within the context of the exhibition, they offer new insight into the subject matter" (p. 170).

Taking their argument one step further, they offer advice to the aspiring research team on where to find such reliable primary sources of information. In their discussion of effective exhibit construction practices they cite, "Reviewing local newspapers, exploring the records of local institutions," and "examining the holdings of historical organizations in the region" (p. 170), as effective methods of building a foundation of information. Zandberg (2010) shares a similar opinion to that of Crew and Sims, stating plainly that, "oral testimonies should be preferred because storytellers re-present the events, while written testimonies only represent them" (p. 9). His argument hints at the notion that authenticity is lost when taken away from the context of face-to-face interaction.

**Community Voices**

In addition to the importance of conducting high quality research, scholars stress the importance of telling dynamic stories that included multiple community voices in the process of creating authentic museum exhibits. This is not to say that all the information influencing the exhibit script must come from card holding

members of a given community. In his article, "White People Will Believe Anything!": Worrying About Authenticity, Museum Audiences, and Working in Native American-Focused Museums," author, Larry J. Zimmerman (2010), describes the danger of including only the perspectives of those highly involved with a particular culture or subculture. Though his example deals specifically with the ongoing struggle of telling authentic stories in exhibitions about Native American culture, the underlying message remains the same regardless of the subject. He argues:

> No matter how unfair keeping Indians from telling their own stories has been, having native voice be the only voice in Indian-focused museums would be unfortunate. Ultimately, misinformation would continue and would be put onto exhibit labels and into programming by Indians. Stereotypes now in place would be replaced with new ones, albeit Indian generated. Museums would remain as damaging to Indians as they ever were (p. 34).

In her article, "Gym shoes, Maps, and Passports, Oh My!: Creating Community of Creating Chaos at the NMAI?," Elizabeth Archuleta (2005) presents a practical approach to balancing the voice of the community with the research conducted by the research team. Quoting the writer Kimberly Blaeser, she states,

> We have a response-ability and a responsibility to the telling. We can and we must make the story together.' The result of creating a story together, of taking responsibility for meaning making, means that there is no 'truth' or ending to the story because listeners constantly recreate and remake the

> stories in order to add their own truths based on their own experiences and perspectives (p. 433-434).

Blaeser's quote emphasizes an open ended structure, in which information is displayed, but no right or wrong opinion is forced upon the viewer. Archuleta elaborates, arguing that some credit must be given to the viewer and their ability to analyze information when it comes to the construction of an authentic exhibit. She argues that museums need to place great emphasis on the "visitor's ability to connect the individual stories in each display by understanding their relationship across all of the exhibits" (p. 430).

The literature does suggest, however, that it is necessary to make some distinctions about which stories are told in the exhibit, and therefore not all the responsibility of meaning making can be placed on the museum visitor. Archuleta (2005) goes on to explain that it is the responsibility of museum professionals to present information in such a way that allows the viewer to make connections between the diverse stories being told. In describing one such effective exhibition, she states "Rather than structure the exhibits in a way that guides visitors and 'teaches' them about Indians, leading them from point A to point B to point C, museum curators structured them like the 'many little threads' of a spider web with each strand adding to the larger picture" (p. 429). She explains that such an approach requires visitors "to set aside notions they previously held about museums and Indians, 'listen' to the stories being told in the exhibits, and trust that meaning will be made if they become involved in the storytelling process" (p. 430).

This notion is echoed by Durrans (1994), who too sees the need for museum professionals to gather information, break it down, and allow the audience to make sense of it on their own. He argues that, "exhibitions should reinterpret the otherwise anonymous creators or bearers of cultures as individuals and active social subjects, and should give an impression of the dynamics of the cultures represented" (p. 6). In his discussion of the visitor, Durrans also notes that it is important not only to consider multiple communities when conducting research and creating an exhibit, but it is essential to consider a variety of audiences as well. He states clearly, "Exhibits should be selected and displayed in a manner that is sensitive to the interests of varied audiences" (p. 6).

**New and Compelling Stories**

The literature examined here suggests that by including multiple and diverse stories, museum exhibits will yield new and compelling information. On this note, many scholars share the viewpoint that an authentic exhibition does not necessarily have to tell a story that is familiar to the both the audience and the community at hand. This idea is especially emphasized in the discussion of exhibits about Native American cultures. Zimmerman (2010) is clear with his opinion, arguing that:

> The best Indian museums can be built; the best exhibitions can be assembled; the best programs can be organized; and best staff members can be trained only if we abandon colonial views and associated stereotypes about Indians, dump notions of authenticity centered on the idea that you can't really know about Indians unless you are one, and really embrace the principle that cultural realities are complicated, multithreaded, and multivocal (p. 35).

The author's statement argues that not only is it beneficial to tell new and compelling stories that abandon out of date notions about Native American culture, but that a museum cannot succeed without doing so.

Speaking more generally about the process of learning and teaching about foreign cultures, author Howard Lee Nostrand (1989) shares a similar opinion to Zimmerman, stating that, "some samples of variants are necessary to fructify an otherwise sterile conceptual awareness of how varied a complex culture can be" (p. 51). Durrans (1994) agrees, arguing that, "A worthwhile display… will generally spark off new ideas whatever its underlying philosophy; and most visitors seem to appreciate learning more than what to distrust" (p. 3). This final comment offers an optimistic rendering of the process, suggesting that the audience will be highly receptive to displays that offer new and compelling information and ideas.

**Authentic Use of Objects and Collections**

In museum exhibitions, objects plan an essential role in both the function of the institution and the storytelling process. Crew and Sims (1991) make this point very clear in their discussion of the "Field to Factory" exhibition at the National Museum of American History. They touch upon the shortcomings of the museum's collection in providing ample physical evidence to support the story at hand. They argue that "Passive collections' strategies were not very effective for acquiring the material culture of ordinary people" (p. 166), pointing out a problem that museums face any time that they tell the story of people who would not be considered famous within the scope of history. However, the authors go on to discuss the ways that the museum remedied this issue, including "contact was made with a wide variety of

museums, community organizations, and private individuals in order to locate artifacts" (p. 166), and later adding that "It took extensive work with community organizations and private collectors to acquire the artifacts needed to develop the exhibition" (p. 166). Crew and Sims then introduce the idea that in exhibits that tell the story of "ordinary" people, that is people whose names cannot be found in textbooks, a new way of thinking should be employed. They refer to these types of exhibitions as "idea driven exhibitions" (p. 169), explaining that "in this model, objects do lose their preeminence as the primary source of authority in the presentation; they no longer control the discussion" (p. 169). The freedom from the restraints of object-based storytelling therefore "gives the exhibition team greater latitude in the topics and ideas it can explore" (p. 171).

Other scholars also mention such a shift in the model through which exhibitions are produced. Gilmore and Pine (2007) discuss a similar strategy, and also offers some insight into the ways to best employ objects in these idea driven exhibits. In order to ensure authenticity, the authors assert that a museum must not force meaning upon objects that only marginally tell the story that is being told. Speaking broadly, Gilmore and Pine discuss two rules for demonstrating authenticity in all museum activities. They argue:

> To get real, museums must confront these two standards for all of their artifacts, edifices, and encounters:
>
> (A) Is it true to itself?
>
> (B) Is it what it says it is? (p. 79)

Though not speaking only on the use of objects in exhibitions, the authors' statement provides support for the notion that a simplistic and deliberate approach is essential in creating perceptions of authenticity amongst museum visitors. Nostrand (1989) offers a similar insight in his discussion of the importance of authentic cultural texts when teaching students about foreign cultures. He argues that one issue plaguing those attempting to learn about foreign cultures is their misunderstanding of slang and colloquialisms. American students often imagine that slang expressions and vulgarities, which they find titillating, will make them seem native (p. 51). This is an important concept for exhibit teams to keep in mind as language plays such a key role in the ways in which communities define themselves. Durrans (1994) sums up this discussion, simply stating that "Any engagement with the world, in thought or in action, entails selecting what is relevant to the purpose in hand and rejecting what is not" (p. 2). In short, the literature suggests that making careful choices in the use of objects and the language describing them is an essential element of authentic exhibit creation.

# Chapter III: Methods

## Participants

The goal of this study was to identify the elements of museum exhibits about skateboarding that skateboarders perceived to be authentic. In order to achieve this outcome, data were collected through a card sorting activity with core members of the skateboarding community. Participants with a high level of involvement in the community were chosen as subjects because they were

> likely to have a more fixed or firmly held position on the issue, a more polarized position on the issue, more prior knowledge about the issue, more self-perceived expertise on the issue, more experience with thinking, discussing, or arguing about the issue, and more intense personal interest in the issue (Gunther, 1992, p. 151).

In other words, they were likely to have strong perceptions of authenticity in regards to skateboarding, and were likely to feel compelled to share them.

In addition to being chosen based on their deep involvement in the skateboarding community, participants were selected based on their level of authority within their culture. Authority in a group such as this relies heavily on one's credibility within the collective memory of the community (Zandberg, 2010, p. 7). Having spent a great deal of my life as a member of the skateboarding community, I was able to identify initial participants who possessed these criteria based on my own previously acquired "cultural competence" (Driver, 2011, p. 977). As discussed in Christopher Driver's (2011) article "Embodying Hardcore:

Rethinking 'Subcultural' Authenticities," cultural competence is gained through "pre-existing cultural proximity" to a certain group (p. 976), and is often sighted as an advantage in research into "cultural groupings whose defining characteristics are partially or wholly 'elective'" (Hodkinson, 2005, p. 134-135), or those characterized by an "oppositional nature" (Beverland et al., 2010 p. 702). In his article, "'Insider Research' in the Study of Youth Cultures," Paul Hodkinson (2005) echoes these advantages, and notes that "outsiders have successfully gained the trust and support of their target community," but "such examples also demonstrate that non-insiders may have to work hard over a long period of time in order to gain the levels of trust they require" (p.137). However, approaching one's own community from a scholarly standpoint immediately changes the individual's role within that community. In speaking of his own research, Driver (2011) states, "from the moment I made the decision to enter into research on hardcore, my relatively clear position as subcultural insider operated alongside the equally important role of ethnographer" (p. 976). In this regard, it can be argued that some level of outsider status is always present in scholarly research.

Though they were chosen primarily on the basis of previously acquired knowledge of the skateboarding community, the participants, who will be referred to here by their first names–Mikey, Max, Joel, Al, Sid, Mark, and Brian–did posses some mutual characteristics. All were males between the ages of 25 and 62, and many have worked in some branch of the skateboarding industry. For instance, several participants had worked at or owned skate shops, and another participant was previously an employee for an established skateboarding brand. Likewise, all

cited that they participated in the act of riding a skateboard on a regular basis, and many have been involved in activities outside their jobs, such as building DIY skateparks, that contribute to their level of authority. Some of these participants were identified through snowball sampling. This methodology is often employed in studies on communities that rely heavily on collective memory and perceptions of credibility amongst members in establishing authority (Mikkonen, 2010; Hutson, 2010).

**Instrument**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants using two card-sorting activities. Interviews were audio recorded and designed to take no more than one hour, an allotment determined based on the lengths of interviews conducted in studies with similar groups (Mikkonen, 2010; Hutson, 2010, Driver, 2011, Beverland et al., 2010). Subjects were shown images and label copy from four different museum exhibits focusing on the subject of skateboarding, and were asked to divide them into groups based on their perceived level of authenticity. Images and label copy were acquired during visits to museums between September 2013 and March 2014. The exhibits were chosen on the fact that they were all open and accessible during the period of time in which this project took place. Although the selection of exhibits was based primarily on timing, the exhibits shown in this study represented a diverse spectrum of organizations.

The first exhibit examined was the Everhart Museum in Scranton Pennsylvania. Their exhibit, *Sidewalk Surfing: The Art and Culture of Skateboarding*,

was on view to the public from August 7 to December 30, 2013. The Everhart Museum is an institution whose collection and mission cover the disciplines of Art, Science, and Natural History. The second exhibit examined was the Morro Bay Skateboard Museum in Morro Bay California. The Morro Bay Skateboard Museum is a non-profit institution founded in 2012, whose mission is "to share the skateboarding's history and culture with all ages of skateboarders and the general public" (Morro Bay skateboard Museum, 2013). The third exhibit was The Skateboarding Hall of Fame and Museum, a non-profit institution run in conjunction with the Skatelab skatepark in Simi Valley, CA. The Museum opened its doors in 1997 and contains over 5,000 vintage skateboards in its collection (Skateboarding Hall of Fame, 2014). Finally, the fourth exhibit examined in the interviews was *RAMP IT UP: Skateboard Culture in Native America,* created by the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. Images and label copy were acquired while the exhibition was on display at the Hibulb Cultural Center in Tulalip, Washington. The exhibit focused on the role of skateboarding in Native American communities, but also discussed the topics of skateboarding history and culture.

The interviews consisted of two card-sorting activities, each geared toward gaining insight into the elements of the four museum exhibitions that participants perceived to be the most authentic, and those that were perceived to be inauthentic. Prior to the two card sorting activities, participants were asked to comment on the characteristics that they believed to make up authenticity. Because of the subjective nature of the term, this approach avoided some of the pitfalls of using a standardized definition, and allowed participants to "tell their story in their own

terms" (Beverland et al., 2010, p. 702). Thus, the first step in each interview was to ask the participant to provide their definition, establishing a point of reference for the rest of the activity.

In the second step, ten laminated cards were placed in front of the participant, each showing exhibit label text from the exhibits. To avoid any influence based on preconceived notions about the exhibits or their host institutions, information linking labels to their respective exhibits was not provided. Some of the exhibitions employed far more exhibit label writing than others. In this step of the interview, labels from all institutions were used, however, a shortage of labels at some institutions did not allow for labels of the same type to be shown from each museum. Thus, this group shows a mix of object and concept labels.

Participants were asked to divide the ten labels into three categories: Labels that tell an authentic story, labels that tell an inauthentic story, and labels that they are unsure about. After giving them time to make these distinctions, and allowing them to ask any clarifying questions, participants were asked to comment on why they separated the cards into their respective groups. This question was used to spark further conversation and gain specific details that contribute to perceptions of authenticity and inauthenticity amongst the target audience.

In the final step, 39 laminated cards were arranged in front of the participant, each showing a photo taken in one of the exhibitions. The number of cards was chosen based on best practices highlighted in Bella Martin and Bruce Hanington's (2012) Universal Methods of Design: 100 to Research Complex Problems, Develop Innovative Ideas, and Design Effective Solutions (p. 26). Participants were again

asked to separate the cards into three groups, this time focusing on their perceptions of the following: items that would appear in an authentic exhibit, items that would appear in an inauthentic exhibit, and items that they are unsure about. Participants were again asked to explain their decisions.

**Analysis**

Prior to conducting the interviews, each of the 49 cards used in the card sorting activities was assigned a number. During the course of each interview note was taken of which labels and objects participants sorted into authentic, inauthentic, and unsure piles, and the results were placed in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Through this method, items unanimously voted authentic and inauthentic were identified.

All commentary on the card sorting activities, as well as each participant's response to the first step of the interviews, in which they self-defined authenticity, were transcribed from audio capture into Microsoft Word documents. From the transcriptions, reoccurring themes and keywords in the discussions were noted, through which trends in rationale and the decision making process were identified.

# Chapter IV: Results

## Defining Authenticity

Due to the subjective nature of the term authenticity, the first step in each interview asked participants to discuss their own understanding of the characteristics that make up authenticity. While each approached the question somewhat differently, bringing their personal experiences and anecdotes into their interview, a number of common characteristics were identified in multiple conversations.

The most common element of authenticity, mentioned in nearly every discussion of the term, was the notion of purity of intention. Beneath this overarching heading, participants used several different terms to hint at the same concept. Only once were the words "pure intention" explicitly stated. In defining authenticity, Al commented, "It's pure intention; that's what goes into it. I guess it kind of goes back to where it started; where did the idea come from? Was the idea to make money?" Money was a factor noted by multiple participants as a source of inauthenticity. In his discussion of what makes an authentic skateboarding brand, Mikey echoed Al's sentiment, citing the term "genuine" as an authentic characteristic, and describing authentic brands as ones "in it not just to make a quick dollar." This again asserts the idea that the desire to make money off of skateboarding was seen as an impure intention by participants – at least when it is the individual's sole intent – and therefore yields inauthenticity.

On a similar note, both Joel and Sid made reference to the concept of purity of intention citing a belief in one's own actions as a catalyst for authenticity. Joel

described authenticity as "Staying true to what you believe in; finding something you're passionate about and running with it." Sid offered a similar assessment, explaining that for a person to be authentic, "they'd have to be sincere about it and believe in it and actually have knowledge in it." Both comments not only use the words "believe in" to describe purity of intention, but also introduce other keywords that helped to define the term among multiple participants.

The word "true" was cited numerous times in the discussion of the characteristics that define authenticity. However, the term was used in two slightly different contexts. First, truth was cited in the context in which Joel used it, as in an act of virtue relating directly to purity of intention. Brian also used the word in this context, stating "that's what's really authentic in skateboarding; is the things where people are being very true to themselves; very true to skateboarding." Again, his comments refer to the term "true" as an element of one's being, directly associating truth with purity of intention.

However, the term "truth" was also used in its more standard definition, as a description of accuracy. In Max's description of the characteristics that make up authenticity, he linked the term with "something that's true and… something that's real", going a step further and equating truth to "telling an accurate story." In his discussion, Max also mentioned the term "real," which came up in interviews with other participants as well, and was often synonymous with truth. Brian also used the terms as a pair, mentioning honesty as a contributor to authenticity. He described authenticity as "the things that are honest. that are true. It doesn't necessarily have to resonate with me aesthetically, quote unquote, or idyllically, but

you know, it's real; it's true." Though Brian's use of the terms most closely relates back to the discussion of purity of intention, his commentary adds legitimacy to the notion that reality and truth were directly related when participants thought about the concept of authenticity.

The responses of the participants in this first part of the interviews cited purity of intention as necessary to authenticity, but not the only important factor. Another concept that was described as essential to authenticity was the possession of knowledge in relation to a particular field – in this case skateboarding. In Sid's interview, he cited knowledge in the same sentence as the concepts of believing in something and purity of intention. This implies that knowledge was considered as important in the composition of authenticity as the other two characteristics. Sid also cited "firsthand information" as something that "makes authenticity", stressing the importance of gaining knowledge through experience. In Mark's interview, he discussed the implications of a lack of knowledge. "I personally, as a skateboarder, wouldn't be very susceptible to listening to someone's opinion on skateboarding who had very limited knowledge beyond what they had done for research in the last several months." Mark's statement not only stressed the importance of knowledge in creating authenticity, but also links the acquisition of knowledge to a prolonged involvement within the culture.

The concept of longevity was one cited by nearly all participants as necessary in the composition of authenticity. Like Mark, Mikey emphasized the importance of longevity, discussing the implication of attempting to portray authenticity without a long-standing involvement in the culture. He explained that this is not the case with

all activities, and discussed the elements that make skateboarding different from many other cultures.

> You (can) walk into Olympia Sports and buy a football and you can start tossing the football around. There's a level to skateboarding that you're gonna stick out like a sore thumb if you don't know what you're doing or what you're talking about.

He continued by adding, "Skateboarders are very judgmental people; I'm not saying people shouldn't start skating, but you gotta understand that people put in a lot of time to become authentic in skateboarding." He summed up his explanation succinctly, stating "you can't just pick up a board and say 'I'm into skateboarding now.'" This final assertion approaches the concept of longevity as an element of a lifestyle associated with authenticity in skateboarding. In his discussion of authentic individuals within the history of skateboarding, Mikey noted, "they ate, slept, and everything skateboarding," lamenting "if it wasn't for the characters in skateboarding, skateboarding wouldn't be as grand of an activity as it is now."

Sid discussed the lifestyle element of authenticity in relation to his own personal experience, saying, "I've never done anything else, so authenticity to me would be in different stages: starting it and sticking with it…and then being involved in it and being part of the promotion and production of it." Brian also tied in personal experience to his explanation of the necessity of involvement to authenticity, at the same time tying his discussion to the previously mentioned concept of purity of intention. He spoke about his experiences skateboarding as a youth, stating, "you couldn't even get a magazine, so what was authentic was what

was happening in your driveway." With this remark, Brian spoke of the concept in terms of what has historically yielded authenticity in skateboarding, which as all the interviews suggested, was the knowledge gained from long-standing involvement in a culture, during which the individual's intentions remained pure throughout the course of their involvement. Brian went on to describe authenticity as "timelessness," noting things that define "authentic skateboarding - or authenticity in general – are… the things that resonate through skateboarding and through skateboard history."

**Exhibit Labels**

The second step of the interviews, in which participants were asked to examine 10 museum exhibit labels, served as evidence that the subject of authenticity is truly subjective. Of the ten exhibit labels, none were unanimously deemed authentic or inauthentic. Despite the great variation in perceptions of authenticity, a number of trends appeared in the commentary on the exhibit labels.

Perhaps the simplest characteristic noted on multiple occasions as authentic was the inclusion of undisputable facts in an exhibition. In reference to labels #40, #41, and #48, all of which provide information about early skateboards, Brian commented, "This is straight history. We don't have to comment on whether a particular board was authentic or not, it actually happened." He continued, "any representation of the evolution of skateboarding, especially when its tied to Skip Engblom, Makaha, you know, Torger Johnson; this is like, now you're talking about pioneer skateboarders and their boards. And I guess unless you're doing something

extremely contemporary, if you're going to show some sort of skateboarding history, it's gotta have this stuff." In this case, the inclusion of significant historical figures added to the label's perceived authenticity. Referring specifically to label #40, Sid also noted, "Skip's a legend, there's no doubt about that."

Speaking about the characteristics of an authentic story about skateboarding, Al asserted that, "A lot of it's knowing your history." This simple statement seems to account for why Brian and Sid so quickly saw authenticity in labels that presented undeniable historical facts. However, these historical facts were not limited to the mention of significant names within skateboarding's history. As Mark noted in regard to label #49, which describes a skateboard used in a downhill race in 1979, a proper explanation of a time period can signify authenticity in exhibit label writing. He stated, "the year is why this ended up in this category." Though he did not go into great depth about his knowledge of the object itself or the specific event mentioned in the story, the fact that the artifact matched his understanding of a certain time period was cause enough to label it authentic in his mind's eye. In Sid's assessment of the label, however, he offered more specific information regarding the event in which the skateboard on display was used. "That's true, Signal Hill was pretty much the last skateboarding race. I mean, I'm not looking at the board or anything like that, but it seems to be pretty true because of Signal Hill". Like Mark, Sid did not speak directly to the object that the accompanied the label, but used his knowledge of the history of the culture to determine his feelings on the writing.

Just as the accurate presentation of historical information had the potential to yield authenticity, inaccurate information immediately brought about perceptions

of inauthenticity. Label #44, which spoke of the transition from vert skateboarding, the popular style in the 1980s, to street skating, which grew immensely in popularity in the 1990s, was noted on two occasions to present inaccurate information. Brian cited this inaccuracy, stating, "they're talking about 90's street skating; that's not where 90s street came from". Mark shared this opinion almost exactly, noting, "There was a big shift in skateboarding in the early 90s, but it wasn't this". As a result of the perception of inaccurate information, both men deduced that the label told an inauthentic story.

Though presenting accurate historical information was sited on numerous occasions as a deciding factor of authenticity, this was not the only characteristic required in order for participants to perceive authenticity. More commonly, regardless of whether or not the information presented told an accurate story, the language and terminology used in the presentation of the information played an even larger role in the creation of authenticity.

While Mark and Sid both cited the accuracy of historical information as the main signifier of authenticity in exhibit label #49, Mikey pointed specifically to the use of language in the description of the artifact as the deciding factor. "If you didn't know anything about skating, you wouldn't call trucks 'Indies'". He referenced the use of the term 'Indy,' a popular abbreviation for "Independent" Truck Company, perhaps the most popular skateboard truck brand in the industry. Mikey explained his rationale, stating, "skating definitely has its own language". Like Mark, Mikey mentioned nothing about the event discussed in the label text, but found other elements in the label writing that spoke positively to him. This implies that when a

label used the proper language, and told a story that coincided with a participant's understanding of the history of their culture, they were more likely to take what the writer was saying as fact, even if they were unfamiliar with specific elements of the history. This is of great importance if museums hope to teach skateboarders something that they may not have already known about the culture and history of skateboarding .

Proper use of skateboarding-related terminology had the ability to influence the perceptions of authenticity amongst participants, while improper use of language and terminology had a devastating effect. Mikey commented that "wording is a big thing with skating," going into greater detail in his discussion of label #47, which he deemed inauthentic.

> That just sounds kooky to me. It's not describing it correctly. As simple as it sounds, it's just not using the right words. There's a certain language to skateboarding, and I would read that and be like whoever wrote this doesn't really know what they're talking about.

Max expressed a similar feeling about the label, citing the use of the descriptions "corporate sponsors" and "almost pro" to be an inauthentic representation of way that skateboarders speak.

Interestingly however, in his discussion of label #42, which told the story of the role that video production has played in the course of skateboarding's history, Max deemed the presentation of accurate information to be more important than the proper use of language. When asked to elaborate on why he put this particular label in the "authentic" pile, Max noted, "it's really the truth that put it in the

authentic pile. It was not so much to do with the terminology, but it depicts a truth based on my experience in skateboarding". This was the only instance in which truth was deemed more important than the proper use of language, however, making it difficult to say definitively if one characteristic can regularly trump the other.

Additionally, participants often made vague references to an overall feel of authenticity or inauthenticity in regard to the way in which a label was written. In the case of label #48, which described a skateboard that was on display, Joel noted that the story the label "just sounded very authentic". Though the overall feel of the writing worked in favor of the label in this case, more often than not when a participant commented on the overall feel of the writing, it was in a more negative context.

When discussing label #45, in which an amateur skateboarder told the story of his experience with skateboarding, Sid made the comment that the skater's description "sounds weird". In some cases, the overall feel of the way in which a label was written caused confusion among participants, yielding uncertainty as to whether or not the label told an authentic story. In speaking of #47, a label telling the story of another skateboarder, Mark noted, "I'm not a hundred percent sure about how it was written," and later elaborated saying, "it feels forced". Although his sense of uncertainty was not enough to signify inauthenticity, it was cause enough to prevent him from fully endorsing the label. Max spoke about a similar feeling of confusion brought on by the overall feel of label #43, an introductory text titled "Poetry and Paradox in Motion." He commented, "I couldn't tell if it was

written by somebody who skateboarded or not". When probed as to what elements were keeping him from making the distinction, he added, "It was kind of over analytical".

Max's use of the description, "over analytical," though not detrimental enough in this case to immediately signify inauthenticity, was an issue brought up on numerous occasions during the interviews, potentially explaining some of the statements made about the "sound" and "feel" of the exhibit labels. Unlike Max, Sid was more certain in his deduction of whether or not the writer of label #43 was a skateboarder. "It's non skateboarding written", he stated plainly. Quoting the label itself he added, "They climb to new heights' and stuff like that; a skateboarder wouldn't say that. It's overdone". Though his exact wording was slightly different than Max's, the implications of both participants' comments were strikingly similar.

Mark added even greater backing to this argument, stating bluntly,

> 'I don't need to read one of these ever again; one of these articles about how skateboarding is like a way of life, and how it's artistic and poetic, and all this stuff. It's overdone and it never needs to be done again.'

In his commentary, Mark not only implied that the writing itself approached the subject in too critical a fashion, but that such an approach to the discussion of skateboarding was a common occurrence. Mikey's opinion of the label paralleled Mark's, noting that such a heavily philosophical approach signified a detachment from the skateboarding community.

> You talk to anyone who really knows anything about skating and they're not talking about 'poetry in motion,' they're just kinda like 'I like it; I jump on my

> board, it's fun.' This one is just too overwritten, and no skateboarder is going to stop and read this much on a wall.

His final comment speaks directly to the struggle that museums constantly face with the length of exhibit labels. In this case, Mikey's statement suggests that a shorter explanation may not have changed the tone of the writing, but would have been more inviting to an audience of skateboarders. He summed up his opinion of the labels succinctly, noting that the "simple ones" felt the most authentic.

## Exhibit Objects

The final step of the interviews asked participants to examine 39 photos of objects from museum exhibits. Opinions on the images of objects shown to participants during interviews were varied. However, unlike the exhibit labels, there were some objects that received unanimous votes of "authentic" or "inauthentic."

### Authentic Objects

Object #29, a VHS copy of the 1987 Bones Brigade film, *The Search for Animal Chin*, was one item that participants wasted no time in assigning to the authentic pile. For younger participants, who did not start skateboarding until long after the film was released (and in some cases were not even born), the film was viewed as an essential part of the history of skateboarding.




(Object #29)

All participants had seen the film, and Mikey even went so far as to call it a "staple," commenting that, "everyone should see it". Interestingly, Mark also made reference to the fact that the film's appeal reaches outside the world of skateboarding, stating "it almost transcends skateboarding with its popularity". Max placed his emphasis on the historical significance of the film, citing it as, "a huge part of skateboarding's history". Though their sentiments were similar to those of the younger participants, both Sid and Brian, having been active in skateboarding at the time the film came out, were able to connect to *Animal Chin* on a more personal level. Brian commented:

> It just completely encapsulates a whole era and the beginning of what we look at now as cheesy. But at the time it was just unbelievable skateboarding; everything was cheesy. These guys could all do a chest high air and skate a handrail and a launch ramp, they were no joke and they made a lot of money and it just kicked off so much. And I didn't care that they were doing stupid skits in between; everything was stupid. It wasn't the world of hipsters; we were just kids watching stupid shit and then the in-between parts were unbelievable; it made you want to skate.

Sid also noted the presence of the film in its time, stating, "This is (authentic) for sure. Everybody had Animal Chin – *Everybody* had Animal Chin". The responses of participants imply that the overwhelmingly positive response to *The Search for Animal Chin* can be attributed to the timelessness of the artifact. The object appealed to skateboarders of all ages, despite the fact that some had not even been born when it came out.

Object #34 was another that was almost immediately placed in the "authentic" pile by all participants. Those who chose to comment on it viewed the image of Eddie Elguera, performing a trick called a frontside invert, as unmistakably authentic for a few reasons. First, Sid described the image as something that was



(Object #34)

"real". He gave the image one look and immediately identified the skateboarder, stating simply "Eddie Elguera. That's the real deal right there". Similarly, Mark, who also identified the skateboarder despite being 36 years younger than Sid, commented on Eddie Elguera's place within the context of skateboarding's history. He stated, "I don't think there's any argument that he had a big influence on skateboarding history", also estimating that the picture was from the "late 70's". Though this was several years before he was born, Mark's experience as a skateboarder allowed him to assign a rough date to the image without being given the facts.

Brian was also able to assign a rough date to the image asking, “What is that, ‘80, maybe?” Despite the large difference in the ages of the two participants, they both immediately provided a ballpark estimate of when the photo, which was taken in 1979, was taken. This suggests that the photo is not only of historical significance to a wide audience of skateboarders, but furthermore that it possesses a timeless quality that appeals to the perceptions of authenticity of those actively involved in skateboarding. Brian put this timeless quality into perspective remarking, “I don’t even know what year that is but by the photo it could be 2016 and it would be fucking sick”. After Brian viewed this image, he showed his friend (a lifelong skateboarder and former manager of the same shop for more than 15 years) who was also in the shop at the time. The friend, Earl, also viewed the image in a positive light, noting that it brought back memories of looking at photos when they were kids. The two men reminisced, and Brian summed up their conversation nicely by concluding that “the kind of appreciation that an image like this evokes from people that know” was all that it took for him to consider it authentic, “period”.

Object #16, the cover of the first issue of thrasher magazine, was another object that was unanimously perceived to be authentic by the seven participants. Again, each participant again made this distinction almost immediately. Mikey noted that “it’s a historic cover, it’s a Steve Cab cover”, implying that not only did the year of the issue make it historically significant, but that this specific magazine was historic because of the legacy of the man featured on the cover. Sid’s remarks placed a similar emphasis on the figure, stating that he is “still there killing it”. This

remark specifically implies that the individual is one of great fame and significance to skateboarders of all generations.




(Object # 16)

Though these participants noted the historical significance of the figure on the cover of the magazine, it was the magazine itself that drew the most acclaim. In his response, Mark stated quite directly, "This is *Thrasher*. That's *the* magazine". Similarly, Brian referred to *Thrasher* as "*the* authentic skateboard magazine". The use of the term "the" in reference to this object implies that not only is *Thrasher* magazine a significant part of skateboarding history, but it is regarded as a quintessential publication on skateboarding's culture both past and present.

Though the other participants did not use quite the same terminology, their sentiments placed equal importance on the magazine's position within the culture. Mikey commented not only that, "it's probably the biggest magazine in skateboarding" but went on to say, "if you know anything about skating, *Thrasher* is a rad magazine". Sid echoed this assertion, saying "No problems there".

Object #19, an advertisement for OJ Wheels featuring skateboarder, Natas Kaupas, jumping from the roof of one U-Haul truck to another, evoked similar memories of a certain time period for both Brian and Sid. Sid began his remarks by confirming the skateboarder's level of authenticity, and went on to explain his personal memory of the ad as well as the skater's place within the history of skateboarding. "Anything Natas does is a winner. I remember that ad; that's a



(Object #19)

groundbreaker, you know what I mean? … ollieing gaps was pretty much unheard of until Natas came through". Similarly to his discussion of the photo of Eddie Elguera, part of Sid's commentary included assertions that the individual featured in the image was significant in the progression of skateboarding tricks. However, at no point did Sid identify either skater as somebody who invented any particular maneuver, but rather as people who brought them to the forefront of the culture and inspired others after them. Brian confirmed the skater's position as an innovator, attributing his style to a certain era within the culture. "This is authentic because it's that era; mid-90s skateboarding going to the next daredevil level big ollie. Natas and big ollie were synonymous". Again, the skater's position in history was described not in the context of invention, but rather innovation.

Mikey's assessment of the photo as authentic stemmed from an appreciation of both the skater and the company that produced the ad. "OJ wheels is just an original wheel company, they've been around forever". He goes on to describe Natas Kaupas as somewhat of a skateboarder's skateboarder, noting, "if you ask any of the old timers, they're like 'Natas rules, he was my favorite growing up'". Though their terms were not so explicit, both Brian and Sid's remarks prove Mikey's statement regarding Kaupas's popularity at the time to be true. Additionally, Mikey asserted that Kaupas is a figure that non-skateboarders might overlook, saying, "He's not a Tony Hawk. He's not a household name, but if you know anything about skating you know that's an important name". Perhaps not coincidentally, the exhibit featuring

this photo was the Skatelab Skateboard Hall of Fame, which is owned and operated by a long-time skateboarder.

Object #31, a photograph of a DIY Skatepark in Ireland, was also perceived to be authentic in the eyes of all participants. The object garnered a great deal of enthusiasm from the participants, and drew possibly the most extensive commentary of all the objects shown.



(Object #31)

The thread tying all the participants' comments together was the notion that the image was authentic because of what it told the viewer about the people by and for whom the skatepark was built. To all the interviewees, the skatepark in the photo symbolized the initiative of skateboarders to take matters into their own hands. This characteristic of self-reliance was viewed favorably by all the participants, and was consistently attributed to authenticity. Mikey commented that, "they didn't just

sit around waiting for somebody to make it for them". His sentiments were matched by Mark who offered the opinion that with "this type of thing…skateboarders have no intention of notoriety," adding that, "they do it out of necessity". Al was quite direct in his admiration of the skatepark, stating, "That rules. You know how that was built if you skate. That was built by skateboarders". Al's comment builds upon the idea that not only does the skatepark represent a certain mentality that is viewed as authentic in skateboarding culture, but that this style of park is recognizable to an audience of those highly involved in the skateboarding community. The positive perception of the DIY initiative in skateboarding was also championed by Max, who remarked, "I put it in the authentic pile because it demonstrates the initiative that skateboarders have. If there's nothing to skate, you make something; it's real". The term "real" was spoken on numerous occasions during interviews. Interestingly, the term was associated with both notions of authenticity and inauthenticity.

In his commentary on object #8, a photo of skateboarding pioneer, Tom Sims, Brian referred to the image as "the real deal". His use of the term "real" suggests the notion that the image is an authentic representation of skateboarding during that time period. "You just see it and you see '70s skateboarding; you see the park, you see the big glove, and thin knee pads, and the whole thing, and it's like 'yeah, this is as real as it gets'". This statement implies that Brian's ability to associate specific equipment and a specific style of skatepark to a certain time period contributed to his perception of authenticity. Mark also commented on the style of skatepark, again attributing certain aesthetic and physical characteristics of the park to a time

period in skateboarding's history. "You can tell by the skatepark…that it was at the beginning of when skateboarding got popular because it's a well built concrete park, but it's all bowls without coping".



(Object #8)

All participants deemed this photo of Tom Sims as authentic. However, they noted a wide variety of reasons as to why the photo fit into that category. While both Mark and Brian commented additionally on Sims' position as a pioneer in the creation and production of skateboards, Mikey commented on the trick that Sims is performing in the photo, expressing his approval by saying "That's a sick frontside slash". This suggests that the trick being performed in the photo is one that has the ability to contribute to a skateboarder's level of authenticity.

In their discussion of object #31, both Joel and Brian used the term "grimy" to identify an authentic element of skateboarding culture. In his description of the image, Brian began by acknowledging that the park looked "really hard to skate…not built for public consumption". Though he had never skated the park, he could provide this analysis based on experience with those built in a similar manner by skateboarders for skateboarders. He went on to point out that the park was "graffitied" and "grimy", attributing both characteristics to authenticity. He summed up his commentary by saying, "everything is authentic about that".

Joel also used the term "grimy" as an indicator of authenticity. However, he took the term a step further, using it to describe the alignment of the photo to the act of skateboarding itself. He noted, "the picture alone speaks a lot to skateboarding in the fact that it's kind of a grimy thing and it's just kind of a grimy photo, and it doesn't matter that you're grimy". Like the other participants, he also commented on the elements of perseverance and self-reliance present in skateboarding culture. "You're getting sweaty and gross and falling down and getting up and trying things again, and (in) a lot of other activities, for lack of a better term, there isn't that resilience". The comments of all participants in regards to this image speak to a larger notion that skateboarders perceive a self-reliant and resilient attitude to be highly authentic. During the interviews, all participants immediately identified the image as authentic, but then spent a great deal more time examining it, saying things like "look how awesome this is," and "it's a work of art in itself" (Mikey).

Object #30, a photograph of the Skate Study House, a skateable work of art designed to resemble the inside of a house, was one of only two artifacts produced after 1980 to be unanimously voted authentic. Brian noted the object's importance in a modern setting, stating, "This is very authentic modern skateboarding because now skateboarding is pure aesthetic; everything is perfectly clean; it's in a gallery".



(Object #30)

He continues his approval by adding, "everything about this is awesome: the trick is awesome, the photo is awesome, the setting is awesome. Skateboarding is intangible now", and goes on to explain how the photo illustrates the current state of skateboarding saying, "You can't be pretty enough, you can't be good enough, you have to be 6 foot tall, a model, and beyond the realm of what's physically possible". One might understand this to be a negative connotation, but Brian finalizes his

statement by saying "And you know what? Just because I'm jealous doesn't mean it's not awesome".

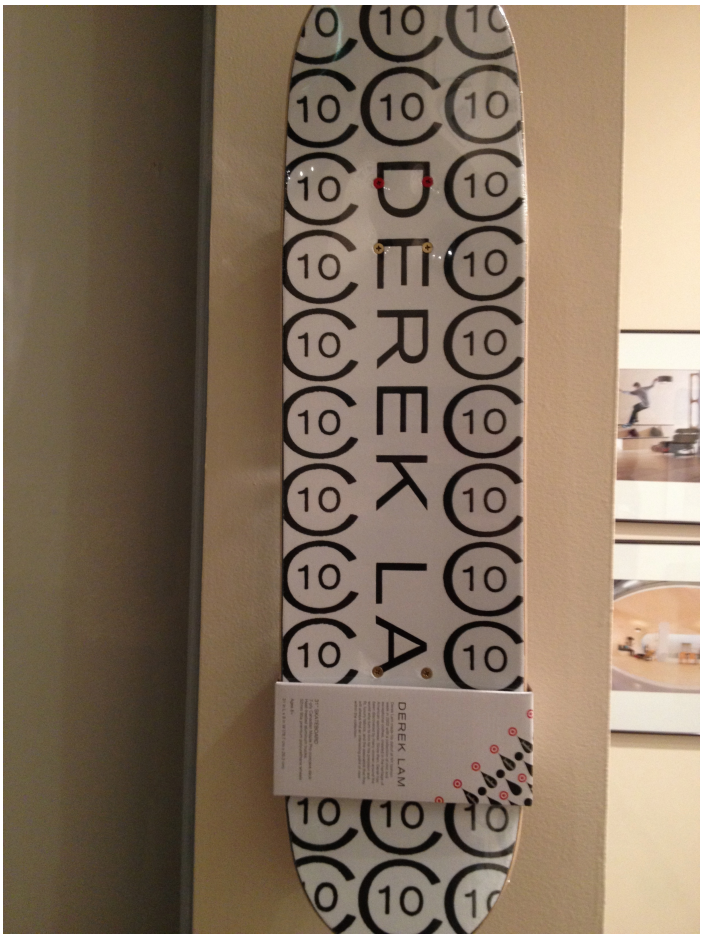
Brian's approval was echoed by Mikey, whose enthusiasm was evident in his response. "*This* is cool, dude". It is probable to say that part of his high level of approval can be attributed to his familiarity with the photo. He immediately followed his initial exclamation with "Did you see the write up in a magazine they had about this? Stefan Janoski is the man too". In this final portion of commentary, he identifies the skateboarder in the photo, adding another layer of authenticity to his already positive view of the photograph.

Mark also showed a familiarity with the photo, which in turn contributed to his perception of authenticity in regards to the Skate Study House. He noted, "This is the Skate House. I think this was on the cover of *Thrasher*". This of course, was not the first time that *Thrasher* magazine was lauded as authentic. This is not to say that Mark would have viewed the photo in a different light had it been featured in a different publication, but the association with a magazine that all participants cited as authentic likely contributed to the perception of authenticity here as well.

### Inauthentic Objects

Though the participants had a variety of things to say about the objects they deemed authentic, their opinions on which labels were inauthentic were even more varied. Only three objects were unanimously perceived to be inauthentic. First, all the participants viewed object #4, a skateboard deck designed for Target by designer Derek Lam. All of the participants who chose to comment on this image

mentioned that the name Derek Lam was not one they associated with authenticity in skateboarding. Mikey made his disapproval immediately clear, stating bluntly, "What the fuck is this? Derek Lam?"




(Object #4)

Al offered a similar objection to the image, commenting, "That just comes across way too much as a designer who doesn't give a fuck about skateboarding". He goes on to add "there's nothing about skateboarding in that to me". Al's comments refer back to the first question that was asked of participants, in which a common theme of authenticity was the perception of pure intentions. Al's comments imply that he

perceived Derek Lam's intentions to be monetarily driven, and therefore deemed the object to be inauthentic.

Though their comments lacked the strong language of Mikey's and Al's, the remainder of the participants shared their opinions on the object. Both Mark and Max noted that they were unfamiliar with the name Derek Lam, but still felt that the object did not embody their sense of authenticity. Brian, on the other hand, found inauthenticity in another aspect of the object. After noting that he did not recognize the name or the skateboard he once again employed the help of Earl, who did not recognize the name either. Brian returned to the photo looking more closely and asked "Is that Target?", pointing to small logo on the board. After I informed him that the board was indeed associated with the store Target, Brian placed the image in his inauthentic pile without giving it another thought. His commentary was simple. "I asked you if it had a Target logo on it, you said yes. Inauthentic. Target has got nothing to do with skateboarding". Similarly to Al's comments, it can be concluded that Brian's disapproval of the Derek lam skateboard deck can be attributed to a perceived impure intentions on both the part of the designer and the company Target.

Another object unanimously voted inauthentic was object #25, a photograph in which three longboarders are pictured simultaneously performing maneuvers. As with object #4, the majority of comments surrounding the photograph were based on a perception of inauthenticity on the parts of the skaters and the photographer. Joel suggested that the picture looked staged, noting "it looks like it's trying to be an old photo, but it looks like it's quite new to me".



(Object #25)

In addition to his comment about the staged appearance of the photo, he also found inauthenticity in the act of longboarding itself. "It's not even that I hate longboarding, I think it's they just try to be skateboarding and they could do that by getting a board that's meant to do that". In this statement, Joel likens the act of riding a longboard to an attempt at embodying something that the rider does not embody. Thus, it is logical to draw the conclusion that his view of both the image and its subjects can be attributed to the perception of impurity of intention.

Like Joel, Mark also noted a difference between longboarding and skateboarding, stating "If you're gonna do a skateboard exhibit, I think that newfangled longboards don't have much of a place in there". He summed up his point simply, remarking, "It's a different culture". Though Mark did not explicitly mention an impurity of intention in his commentary, his opinion of longboarding as a culture separate from skateboarding matched Joel's. In Mark's case, the cause of

inauthenticity was more closely related to inaccuracy and a lack of knowledge into the two cultures than ill will.

Brian's take on the photo, however, was more similar to Joel's than Mark's. The first thing he pointed out was that the photo was intended to make money, an indicator of impure intentions. "This posing in the alley to sell you something…Nobody here is doing anything real," wrapping up his commentary by noting, "it's all a setup; there's nothing authentic about being a poser". Not only does Brian's statement suggest impurity of intentions on the part of both the photographer and the subjects, but also brings up the term "real," which as previously mentioned, was noted by multiple participants as an indicator of authenticity (or in this case, inauthenticity).

The term "real" was used again in Brian's discussion of object #20, a prototype downhill skateboard. He began his discussion of the object with "this is real; this exists", implying that the inclusion of the longboard in the exhibit was not an entirely inaccurate decision. His use of the word "real," in this case, did not refer to the intention of the maker, but rather to the idea that longboarding is a thing that exists that has a tie to skateboarding culture. However, as he continued, he, like the others, pointed out that "it's an undeniable chapter (of skateboarding)…but it's not authentic skateboarding".



(Object #20)

He went on to describe longboarding as "a subculture of skateboarding", asserting that although they are linked, the two cultures are different. However, this link was not something that any of the participants, including Brian, felt strong enough to warrant the inclusion of longboarding in an exhibit about skateboarding. His final comments on the object bring to light the subjectivity that contributes to perceptions of authenticity. "I guess that's my own personal feeling, that I marginalize that. I don't know if that's right, I just don't find it authentic".

Though Brian noted that his view of object #20 was his own personal outlook on the subject, other participants shared his feelings on the distinction between

longboardng and skateboarding. Mikey echoed this distinction, stating quite clearly that the two subjects are not one in the same. “Longboarding is nothing like actual skateboarding. It’s simple: longboarding isn’t an authentic thing in skateboard culture”. Like Brian, Mikey did not attempt to say that longboarding is not something worthy of notice within a museum setting, but asserted that the topic does not contribute to a greater understanding of skateboarding culture. “Yeah, longboarding has its own culture, but it’s not the same; it shouldn’t be mixed with skateboarding”. Al was direct in his reaction, stating bluntly, “I don’t like longboards in general”.

**Outlier**

Perhaps the most controversial image shown to was object #7, a photograph of FDR skatepark in Philadelphia, PA. Like the Irish DIY park that was viewed as authentic by each skateboarder, the park pictured in object #7 was built by hand by skateboarders, without any assistance from the city. However, unlike the pervious image, the park in object #7 was not empty of people. While multiple participants immediately noted the park itself to be very important to skateboarding history and culture, the other contents of the picture caused them to spend a great deal more time considering the meaning and value of such an image.




(Object #7)

"What's funny about this is that it's a picture of a kid on a scooter, but in some ways it's more authentic than all of this other stuff because it's so fucking real", commented Brian. "It's just that most skateboarders don't like it, because it's an offshoot of the culture that's - it's almost like a thorn in the side". Brian's initial statement upon reviewing the photo speaks to great lengths about one of the touchier subjects in skateboarding culture. He also gives support to the notion that authenticity does not always appeal to the community whose story is being told. As he mentioned, in the center foreground of the photo, is a child riding a scooter. The contrast between the gritty underpass DIY skatepark, a historic landmark and right of passage in the eyes of the skateboarding world, and a child on a scooter, an activity generally looked down upon by the skateboarding community, brings to light the reality of the clash between their own culture and popular culture that

skateboarders constantly face. "I think kids on scooters lack respect", noted Joel. Mark echoed Joel's disapproval of a child on a scooter being shown in a skateboarding exhibit, saying, "I don't think the kid on the scooter should be in it, but other than that I think this is a very important piece of skateboarding".

After considering the photo for a few minutes, however, participants began to think more critically about what the photo says about the photographer, the viewer, and skateboard culture in general. Referring to the large graffiti tag seen almost directly above the child in the photo, Al noted, "Don't be a victim. The irony of that is what makes it cool. My focal point isn't the kid on the scooter, it's the 'don't be a victim'; you're like 'oh what do they mean?' and then you're like, '*oh*'". Al was not the only person to comment on the poignancy of the tag reading, "Don't be a victim" scrawled across an underpass support in enormous lettering. Mikey commented, "'Don't be a victim' on the top. As funny as that is, I hope someone took a picture of that and thought it was funny and put it in". Unlike Al, Mikey's comment implies that although the photo contained deeper meaning than was immediately apparent, this critical look at skateboarding did not warrant an "authentic" tag.

However, leaning more towards Al's take on the image, Brian continued his assessment of the piece by saying,

> Conceptually, it's about as authentic as it gets because the person who took this picture knew exactly what they were taking a picture of. And that makes it really, really good because it's a kid at FDR. These dudes traveled to this place and people travel for thousands of miles to go here and here's this kid on a scooter – it's just a city kid on a scooter.

Brian's commentary refers back to the notion that an image can tell an authentic story without being perceived as something positive or something that skateboarders want to see in an exhibit that aims to inform the public about their community. In this sense, the discussion of object #7 provided support to the idea that authenticity is only one piece of the puzzle when approaching a community whose self-perceptions often differ from the perceptions of non-members.

**Limitations**

The discussion of the longboard shown in the picture on object card number 4 illustrates one of the key limitations of this study. During interviews, participants were shown a selection of images out of context, and in most cases, were not shown their accompanying exhibit labels. The rationale for this was that it was impractical to show every object and exhibit label from each of the four exhibits within an amount of time reasonable in which to conduct interviews. The idea was that participants would act primarily on their initial reactions objects shown in each exhibit. Participants were allowed to ask any questions they had about any of the objects, and I would provide them with any additional information that had been made available in the exhibit. However if the participants did not ask any questions, no additional information was provided. In some cases this may have affected their perceptions of authenticity.

For instance, the lack of background information may have influenced the opinions of participants in regards to object #4, which they unanimously voted inauthentic. Had they been shown the exhibit label in addition to the object, they

would have seen that the longboard in the photograph was a prototype built by Daniel Harold Sturt. From my personal knowledge of skateboarding, and research conducted for other projects, I have acquired the understanding that Daniel Sturt is well respected within skateboarding culture. Though this is mere speculation, it seems reasonable that the participants may have at least recognized the name. Though their perceptions of the object itself may not have been reversed as a result of the connection between the photographer and the longboard, it seems likely that this would have resulted in somewhat conflicted opinions, and would have landed object #4 in the "unsure" pile for some, rather than immediately into the inauthentic one.

## Chapter V: Conclusion

By conducting interviews with seven members of the skateboarding community, and asking them to comment on elements from museum exhibits about skateboarding, this study was able to provide answers to the question, what elements of museum exhibits about skateboarding do skateboarders perceive to authentic? The data suggest that though opinions are varied, skateboarders perceive exhibit materials that embody knowledge, pure intention, and longevity, and labels that carefully balance skateboarding-specific language with straightforward themes, to be authentic.

Perhaps more important, however, is what the research suggests about how museum professionals can go about creating authentic exhibits. As noted in the literature, and suggested in interviews, a subcultural population is more apt to accept the word of those who they perceive to have a deep knowledge and long-standing connection to their culture. Therefore, when planning an exhibit about any subculture, museums should connect with and include authoritative figures from that community.

A few characteristics discussed in interviews with participants hint as to where such authority can be found. To find skateboarders with an adequate level of authority, museums may want to reach out to the owners and managers of skate shops in their city. If the shop has been open for many years, chances are good that those running it possess the longevity necessary to qualify them as authoritative

figures. Additionally, years of involvement with the skateboarding community will have given these people a level of knowledge that will be invaluable to the exhibit.

Purity of intention also comes into play when considering who to reach out to. This complicates things somewhat, as skate shops are by their nature intended to make money, a characteristic cited on numerous occasions as a signifier of inauthenticity. In this regard, not all skate shops are created equal. It is the responsibility of the museum professional to use their best judgment, as to the motives of the shop owners. They must ask themselves whether the individual's intent in opening the shop was to make money off of skateboarding, or to make a living from, and in turn support, a community that they have an undying devotion to.

Such a distinction can be difficult to make. However, museum staff must keep in mind that skateboarding has not always been a profitable culture, and chances are the longer a shop has been around, the more sincere the motives are of those who opened it. Likewise, in speaking with shop owners and employees, it is necessary to gauge the depth of the individual's knowledge. Does this person possess a depth of knowledge beyond what is readily available to the general public?

Though this step in the research process will inevitably prove to be tricky, authoritative sources of knowledge have the potential to influence the entire tone of the exhibit. Through their embodiment of the core values of the community, authoritative figures will yield authentic information, and will also be an unmatched

source for connections to the community. Such contacts are likely to yield connections to authentic artifacts as well.

Though the individuals that a museum chooses to work with are likely to be their greatest resource, there are several more paths to authenticity that museums must take into consideration. Perhaps nearly as useful as where to find sources of authority, the data suggests quite a bit about whose stories should be told in an authentic exhibit.

The data suggest that skateboarders do not wish to see the stories of those involved in the more commercial aspects of skateboarding culture. For instance, many negative comments were made by participants about labels that told the stories of skateboarders that focused on competitions and sponsors. This reflects once again on the characteristic of purity of intention. Accordingly, museum staff should consider telling stories that portray a passion for skateboarding and sincerity of motive. An example of this would be the stories of those involved in the construction of DIY skateparks, as such people's intentions were unanimously perceived to be sincere. This is not to say that all the stories told in an exhibit must be completely detached from sponsorship or competition, but rather that the focus should not be put on such details.

The same methodology can be employed in choosing historical individuals to highlight within an exhibition. The characteristic of knowledge is highly important in this regard. Take for example, two figures that drew a great deal of positive commentary from participants: Eddie Elguera and Natas Kaupas. Both men were noted to be significant to skateboarding's history, yet it is unlikely that their names

would be recognized by non-skateboarders. Their inclusion in the exhibits signified a depth of knowledge beyond that of the general public. When examining historical figures, museums should steer clear of those that are widely known to non-skateboarders, and opt instead for those who have played significant roles in skateboarding's history while remaining out of the public spotlight. Such figures are likely to be found only when referring to non-scholarly materials created by and geared toward skateboarders themselves. *Thrasher* magazine was one such resource cited on numerous occasions by participants. Interviews and discussions with authoritative figures are also essential to this process.

Finally, the data suggest methods through which museums can ensure authenticity in their exhibit labels. The first rule of thumb in this regard is to stereotypically skateboarding-related slang. In nearly all the interviews, participants employed language that is stereotypically associated with skateboarding culture – words such as "dude" and "sick" – but exhibit labels that used this same terminology were largely seen as inauthentic. There were a couple of occasions in which the correct usage of skateboarding-specific terminology was a contributor to authenticity, however such instances focused on technical terms rather than slang. If museums do choose to include such terminology, it is advisable to keep jargon specific and to a minimum.

The second recommendation drawn from the findings may prove problematic depending on the museum's goals in exhibiting skateboarding culture. Participants responded favorably to exhibit labels that employed simple themes, and reacted negatively to those they felt overanalyzed the culture. While the results

suggest that the former of these two approaches will yield authentic perceptions, this notion seems to clash with what museums strive to do in their exhibits, which is approach concepts from a analytical angle, and often to provide new insight into a community. In this case, it is the responsibility of the exhibit team to be very clear about their target audience, and plan their exhibit accordingly. While the skateboarding community may shy away from highly analytical readings of their culture, non-skateboarders may respond differently.

On this note, it is necessary to understand that authenticity is but one piece of a much larger puzzle. It is an important piece, essential even, but museums must remember that authenticity does not necessarily equate to success. When planning exhibits about skateboarding, museums must carefully consider their goals and target audience. If the goal is to engage the skateboarding population, the resulting exhibit may look slightly different than one intended to teach non-skaters about skateboarding culture. If the goal is to create an exhibit that appeals to both groups, a museum may want to conduct research in the same vein as this study, in which representatives of each target audience are shown objects and labels from similar exhibits and asked to comment on them.

This same approach can be applied to the study of any community, not just skateboarders, and has the potential to educate museums as to how members perceive their own cultures. Such insights not only positively affect visitors' perceptions of such communities, but can also broaden a museum's understanding of the public they serve.

# References

Anderson, C. W. (2007). Journalistic Professionalism, Knowledge, and Cultural Authority: Towards a Theoretical Framework" *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, TBA, San Francisco, CA Online* <PDF>. 2013-12- 15

Archuleta, Elizabeth. (2005). Gym Shoes, Maps, and Passports, Oh My!: Creating Community or Creating Chaos at the NMAI? American Indian Quarterly, 29(3&4), 426-449.

Beverland, Michael B., Farrely, Francis, and Quester, Pascale G. (2010). Authentic Subcultural Membership: Antecedents and Consequences of Authenticating Acts and Authoritative Performances. Psychology & Marketing, 27(7), 698-716.

Coan, L. (2014, April 2). How Old is Too Old to Skateboard? *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/active/10734738/How-old-is-too-old-to-skateboard.html

Crew, Spencer R. & Sims, James E. (1991). Locating Authenticity: Fragments of a Dialogue. From Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display. Washington, DC: Smithsonian institution

Driver, Christopher. (2011). Embodying Hardcore: Rethinking 'Subcultural' Authenticities. Journal of Youth Studies, 14(8), 975-990.

Duranti, Alessandro. (1997). Linguistic Anthropology. Cambrdge: Cambridge University Press.

Durrans, Brian (1994). Behind the Scenes: Museums and Selective Criticism. Anthropology Today, 8(4), 11-15.

Gilmore, James H. & Pine, Joseph B. II. (2007). Museums & Authenticity. Museum News, 76-80, 92-93.

Gunther, Albert C. (1992). Biased Press or Biased Public?: Attitudes Toward Media Coverage of Social Groups. Public Opinion Quarterly, 56, 147-167.

Hannington, Bruce & Martin, Bella (2012). Universal Methods of Design: 100 Ways to Research Complex Problems, Develop Innovative Ideas, and Design Effective Solutions. Beverly, MA: Rockport Publishers.

Hardt, Hanno. (1993). Authenticity, Communication, and Critical Theory. Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 10, 49-69.

Hodkinson, Paul. (2005). 'Insider Research' in the Study of Youth Cultures. Journal of Youth Studies, 8(2), 131-149.

Hutson, David J. (2010). Standing OUT/Fitting IN: Identity, Appearance, and Authenticity in Gay and Lesbian Communities. Symbolic Interaction, 33(2), 213-233.

King, Stephen A. (2006). Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums: Constructive Authenticity and the Primitive Blues Subject. Southern Communication Journal, 71(3), 235-250.

Lee, James. (2012). 5 Embarrassing Articles Written About Skateboarding by Non-Skaters. *Jenkem Magazine*. Retrieved from: http://www.jenkemmag.com/home/2012/09/20/5-embarrassing-articles-written-about-skateboarding-by-non-skaters/.

Mikkonen, Ilona. (2010). Negotiating Subcultural Authenticity Through Interpretation of Mainstream Advertising. International Journal of Advertising, 29(2), 303-326.

Nostrand, Howard Lee. (1989). Authentic Texts and Cultural Authenticity: An Editorial. The Modern Language Journal, 73(1), 49-52.

Pareso, B. (2009, November 9). If You Like To Skateboard, I Hope You Never Have Children. *Long Island Press*. Retrieved from: http://archive.longislandpress.com/2009/11/09/if-you-like-to-skateboard-i-hope-you-never-have-children/

Silverman, L. H. (2010). *The Social Work of Museums*. New York: Routledge.

Zandberg, Eyal. (2010). The Right to Tell the (Right) Story: Journalism, Authority and Memory. Media Culture and Society, 32(5), 5-24.

Zimmerman, Larry J. (2010). "White People Will Believe Anything!" Worrying about Authenticity, Museum Audiences, and Working in Native American-Focused Museums. Museum Anthropology, 33(1), 33-36.

Appendix A: Exhibit Labels

Label # 40

**1960's Makaha**

Solid oak, double action spring trucks.
Legend has it that Skip Engblom wood
burned the logos and assembled these
boards in the Makaha factory in 1963.
Makaha was founded by
skateboard/surf board industry legend
Larry Stevenson

Label #41

**Black Knight Skateboard**
**Late 1960's/Early 1970's**

Single action trucks with clay wheels.
This was one of the most popular boards during
the urethane wheel rebirth of skateboarding
because it was readily available at Thrifty Drug
Stores throughout southern California.
Manufactured by Sport Fun, Los Angeles, CA

Label #42

**Dude, Don't Drop the Camera!**

Skaters have been documenting their moves since the first surfer put wheels on a board. Progressing from the snapshots of the 1970s and the Bone Brigade videos of the 1980s, filmmaking has become an integral part of skateboard culture. As cameras become smaller, cheaper, and more accessible, today's skaters can now shoot, cut, and post their footage on the internet within a few hours. Much of the work is rough, but some amazing productions have come from skaters with cameras, risking their equipment and sometimes bodily harm in order to get the right shot.

Label #43

**Poetry and paradox in motion**

Skateboarding seems to challenge the laws of physics and gravity, but in fact skateboarders are extremely adept at controlling their bodies to get force, lift and speed on these simple tools combining wood or fiberglass with a set of wheels. As skateboarders turn, twist, and jump in their attempts to nail tricks, the skateboards become an extension of the rider's body. These riders are in tune with their environment, and the composite elements of the skateboarding experience can be abstracted when these skateboarders turn to expressing this activity in their art. The sounds and movements on the street, in the bowl, or through the air have a unique choreography and can signal the moment in which the skateboarder tackles his or her own personal challenge.

Skateboarding has many contradictions within the sport and the culture it has created. For example, is it a sport, or is it a pastime? Amateur or professional? Street or vert? Vandalism or art? Counterculture or mainstream? Young or old? Dangerous or safe? Freestyle or bowl? Regular or goofy? For skateboarders, it likely encompasses all of these elements, despite the contrariness, and the meaning is unique for each individual. Many skateboarders have found difficulty in finding their social niches, and the iconoclastic nature of the activity has long held appeal for skaters who did not find ease or success in more traditional formats, such as school or sports.

Skateboarding culture has impacted popular culture in many different ways, including publishing (magazines, books and comics), television and film, as well as a variety of boarding activities, such as fingerboarding. The skateboarding industry is also recognizing the aftermath of production and use; producing skateboards and materials creates and enormous amount of waste, but it also uses natural resources, such as timber, at a very high rate. Many designers are at the forefront of recycling old and broken skateboards as a design material for use in home building and housewares, as well as decorative elements for personal use. Skateboard design is constantly adding new elements, and looking at new applications as the abilities of riders climb to new heights and continue to challenge what is physically possible on a skateboard.

Label #44

**1990s: STREET/X-TREME**

With skateparks becoming increasingly scarce, skaters looked for other places to ride. Inspired by "freestyle" skater Rodney Mullen, who perfected the basic kick-flip trick to almost balletic perfection, skaters began to flip their decks over street curbs, park benches, handrails, stairs and other commonly found objects in the street environment. Communities everywhere reacted by posting "No Skateboarding" signs in many public places. In the public eye, however, skateboarding emerged as an "extreme" sport, as the X-Games brought skaters like Tony Hawk into the limelight.

Label #45

**Tory Grant**

I started skating because all the older kids in my community were skaters. They always skated past my house, so I guess that kind of got me in the mindset of skating, then my step brother
had a really old Birdhouse board he always skated and that's what really got me into skating.
So on April 23rd, 2005 I went to Shank and Title in the Steamtown Mall and my dad got me a Pink Element Bam Margera board, with Pink Bam Margera trucks, Speed Demon bearings, and Rodney Torres Autobahn wheels. That's when it took off from there. I skated everyday for hours and hours till it was dark and I would skate home and do it again everyday. My dad found a skatepark in Tobyhanna and he would take me there everyday and make me drop in the
"huge" ramps there. I learned how to control my board every time I would go skate and I really began getting my tricks dialed in. I wont my first contest in 2007 in Doylestown, PA. My favorite skater at the time was Chris Cole. It was really cool because he and his friends (Hot Wax) put on a demo after the contest and it was such a good feeling winning that contest at 13 and having Chris there to see it all. After that I began competing and really getting serious with my skating. In ever wanted to go to school all I wanted to do was just skate and skate, when
I was even sick I had to skate, if not I wouldn't be happy. I began to film with my friends, we would always skate around Dunmore high School, downtown Scranton, and usually the cities around the 570. Then a skate park in Carbondale was made, and that really made us skaters so happy because traveling to Philly or to Tobyhanna was too far at the time so my parents would always drop me off at Carbondale where I would just practice and practice to get better. So through the years until now I skated in New Jersey at contests, New York City, and all around

the east coast. Most of the kids I skated with through my young ages all got into drugs and alcohol and I'm not the type of kid who does that because I feel it would ruin me and my skating.

The thing I love most about skateboarding is how a piece of wood, a turning system, and 4 wheels can make you happy! I can be so mad at something then step foot on my board and I am the happiest kid ever. I think skating shows who you are. The style you develop over the year's shows you and how much effort and dedication you put into it. It feels good to work on one single trick for hours and finally land it perfectly on the bolts. It's by far definitely harder than the regular sports like football, baseball, and basketball.

The one thing I want people to know about skating and skaters is that we are not different, we are just people pushing a piece of wood, we are not scumbags or mean people. We don't terrorize others; we are just skating and having fun. Around here everyone discriminates skaters for being mean, scummy, drug addicts which none is true. Other things I would like people to know is how hard it is to skate. Your balance has to be so on lock to skate, if you're
not balanced well enough, your either falling or breaking something. I would also like to say is that since there is no college for skating and people say you can't live on skating well guess
again you can. There are contests in the USA and around the world that will make probably triple your salary in one day. My guidance counselor says I need to go to college because skating is a hobby, no skating is not a hobby it's a way of life, it's an art, it's something that can make you a better person. I just hope that skating can get bigger and become something everyone thinks it's a positive thing to do.

Label # 46

## *Eddie Elguera, Boulder Skatepark*

Jim Goodrich
Digital reproduction
Ca. July 1979
Courtesy of the artist

In this photo, Eddie Elguera is planting his hand as he transitions on the lip of a bowl. Eddie Elguera, known by the nickname "El Gato," is known as the innovator of vertical skateboarding. Some of the tricks which have enabled him to play a major part in skateboarding history include the Elguerial, the frontside rock-n-roll, the fakie ollie and the frontside invert, which he perfected. Before Elguera, it was something of a novelty to skate out of tricks backwards. Many of the tricks he devised required the rider to skate fakie out of the maneuver and the technique became commonplace.

Label #47

## Chedder

Bryant "Chedder" Chapo (Navajo) grew up in Fort Hall, Idaho, and began skating in 1999. A local Idaho skateboard shop, B-Side, recognized Chapo's young talent and awarded him a sponsorship of free decks and shoes in 2002. It was his First Place and Best Trick wins at the 2006 Free Flow Dew Tour in Salk Lake City, Utah, that brought him national attention and his first major sponsor, Goodwood Skates. Living as an "almost pro," Chapo skates full time, traveling frequently for training and competitions. He makes a point of participating in as many Native skateboarding competitions as he can, skating most recently at the San Carlos Apache Reservation's All Nations Skate Jam. Chapo currently has seven corporate sponsors.

Label #48

## 2012 Logan Earth Ski
## Torger Johnson model

(Re-issue)

Torger was a 1960s/1970s skateboarding champion and is credited with influencing the style of a whole generation of skaters, most notably Tony Alva.

Label #49

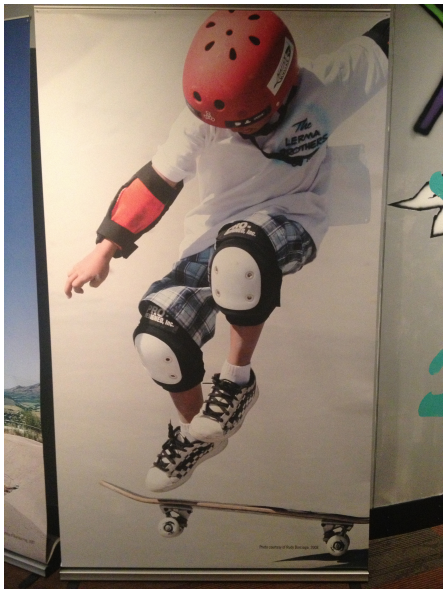
**BLACKIE**
**LENGTH: 48”**
**TRUCKS: INDY 169**
**WHEELS: 70mm KRYPTOS**
**YEAR: 79**
THIS DOWNHILL SKATEBOARD WAS BUILT
AFTER THE LAST SIGNAL HILL RACE TO
COMPETE THE FOLLOWING YEAR, DUE TO
LIABILITY THE RACE NEVER HAPPENED.
THIS BOARD WAS RIDDEN A FEW TIMES THAN
PUT AWAY, LATER TO BE RESTORED TO
ALL ITS GLORY
COURTESY OF THE EG COLLECTION

# Appendix B: Exhibit Objects

Object #1



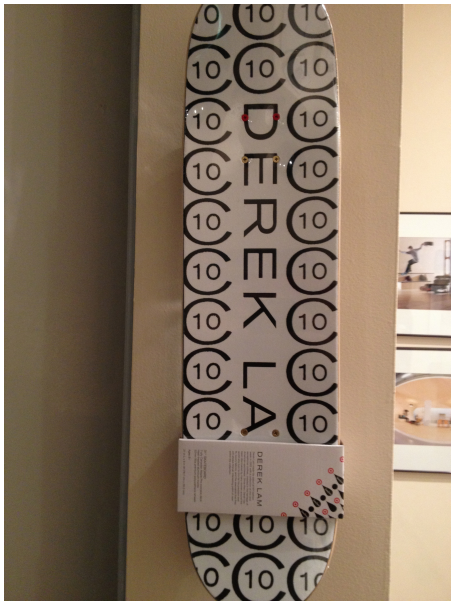

Object #2



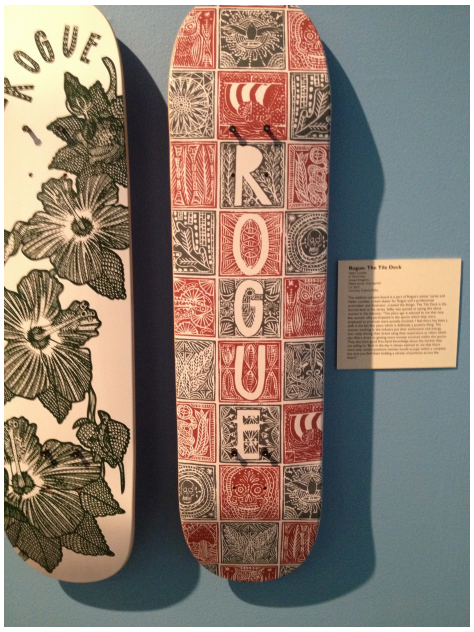
Object #3



Object #4



Object #5




Object #6




Object #7




Object #8



Object #9



Object #10



Object #11




Object #12



Object #13



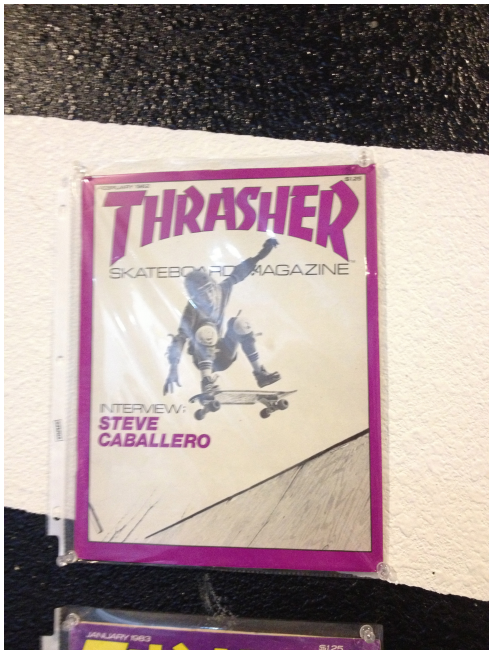

Object #14



Object #15




Object #16




Object #17




Object #18



Object #19




Object #20



Object #21



Object #22



Object #23




Object #24




Object #25



Object #26




Object #27




Object #28




Object #29



Object #30



Object #31



Object #32




Object #33



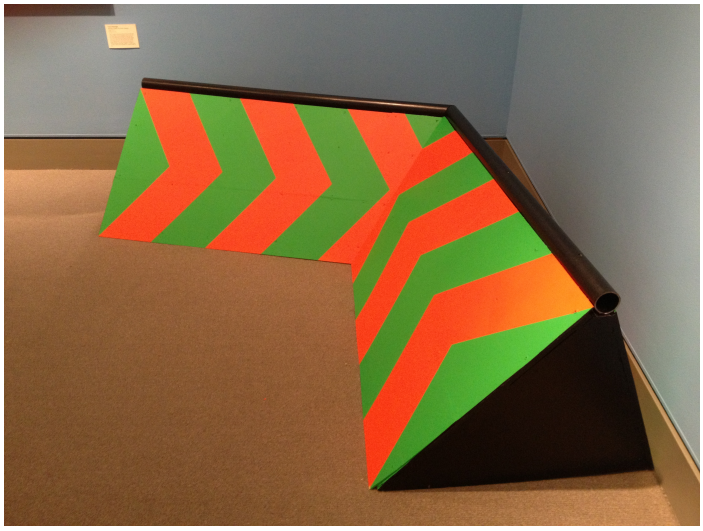

Object #34



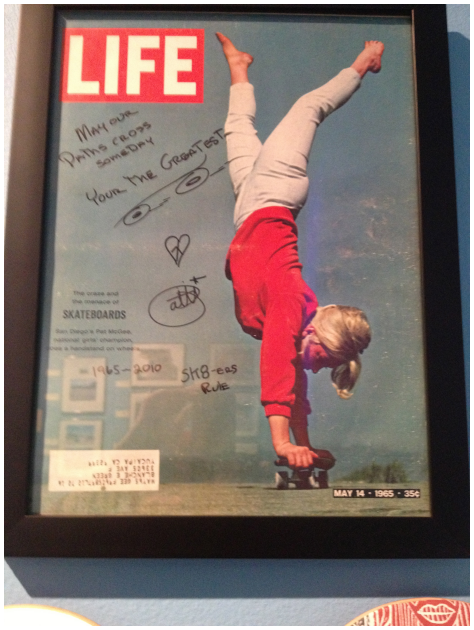
Object #35




Object #36



Object #37




Object #38




Object #39



Appendix C: Code Sheets

| **Theme** | **Commentary** |
|---|---|
| Knowledge | "He's not a Tony Hawk. He's not a household name; but **if you know anything about skating**, you know that's an important name" (Mikey) |
| Knowledge | "..that's authentic 'cause that's a **huge part of skateboarding's history"** (Max) |
| Knowledge | "*Thrasher Magazine* is ***the*** authentic skateboard magazine" (Brian) |
| Knowledge | "*Thrasher* is probably the biggest magazine in skateboarding and it's a **historic** cover; it's a Steve Cab cover" (Mikey) |
| Knowledge | This is *Thrasher*. That's ***the*** magazine" (Mark) |
| Knowledge | "This is **straight history**. We don't have to comment on whether a particular board was authentic or not, it actually happened, so therefore, any representation of the evolution of skateboarding especially when its tied to Skip Engblom, Makaha, you know, Torger Johnson… this is like, now you're talking about pioneer skateboarders and their boards, and I guess unless you're doing something extremely contemporary, if you're going to show some sort of skateboarding history, it's gotta have this stuff." (Brian) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Knowledge | "**if you didn't know anything about skating** you wouldn't call trucks 'indies'" (Mikey) |
| Knowledge | "I look at that, that's Eddie Elguera. I know Eddie Elguera. It's like, fuck that's awesome. A lot of it's **knowing your history**" (Al) |
| Knowledge | Eddie Elguera's a **legit** guy, there's **no doubt about that**. He's still skating to this day" (Sid) |
| Knowledge | "Well Skip's a legend theres **no doubt about that"** (Sid) |
| Knowledge | "they're talking about 90s street skating; **that's not where 90s street came from**. In retrospect, we look back and say 'wow Rodney Mullen did every single street trick,' and that's a correct statement if you do your homework, but I remember reading John Lucero articles back in the late 80s where they were talking about slappying curbs when the skatepark closed. The vert dudes started slappying curbs." (Brian) |
| Knowledge | "true street skaters in the early 90s **were not taking their queues from freestyle**, they had no interest in that at all" (Brian) |
| Knowledge | "There was a big shift in skateboarding in the early 90s **but it wasn't this**" (Mark) |
| Purity of intention | This is **commercial**; it's not authentic. The story is typical, but we wouldn't call it authentic. It goes from pink Bam to "I won my first **contest**." Everything that's authentic happened in between those two stages" (Brian Label) |
| Purity of Intention | "It's **pure intention**; that's what goes into it. I guess it kind of goes back to where it started; where did the idea come from? Was the idea to make **money**?" (Al) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Purity of Intention | "You know, that just comes across way too much as a designer that **doesn't give a fuck about skateboarding**. There's nothing about skateboarding in that to me" (Al) |
| Purity of Intention | "I asked you if it had a **Target logo** on it, you said yes. Inauthentic. **Target** has got nothing to do with skateboarding" (Brian) |
| Purity of Intention | "what it is… is them **selling** you skateboarding. It's weird, its not what skateboarding actually is, it's the way skateboarding was **sold** to you" (Brian) |
| Purity of Intention | "this posing in the alley to **sell** you something. Nobody here is doing anything real, three at a time **it's all a setup** there's nothing authentic about being a **poser"** (Brian) |
| Purity of Intention | "Really hard to skate, **not built for public consumption**"(Brian) |
| Purity of Intention | "…and these guys just did it by hand too, that's another big thing. They **didn't just sit around waiting for someone to make it for them**" (Mikey) |
| Purity of Intention | "…skateboarders have **no intention of any notoriety** and its just they do it out of necessity, and I think that's pretty cool" (Mark) |
| Purity of Intention | "it really demonstrates the **initiative** that skateboarders have. If there's nothing to skate you make something. It's **real**. (Max) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Purity of Intention | "**Staying true to what you believe in** finding something that you're **passionate** about and running with it" (Joel) |
| Language/Terminology/ Narrative | "That just sounds **kooky** to me. Its **not describing it correctly**, as simple as it sounds it just **not using the right words.** There's a certain language to skateboarding and I would read that and be like 'whoever wrote this doesn't really know what they're talking about'" (Mikey) |
| Language/Terminology/ Narrative | "The artifact is authentic, but this **language** is not authentic" (Brian) |
| Language/Terminology/ Narrative | "Right off the bat the word extreme spelled incorrectly, **abbreviated** like that, that's an immediate write off. It just **sounds like someone who doesn't know anything about skateboarding**" (Mikey) |
| Language/Terminology/ Narrative | "This one in particular just the **way it was written** it just sounded like it came from an **outsider's perspective"** (Max) |
| Language/Terminology/ Narrative | "…a skateboarder **wouldn't say that**. It's **overdone**." (Sid) |
| Language/Terminology/ Narrative | This one is just too **overwritten,** and just like, no skateboarder is going to stop and **read this much** on a wall (Mikey Label) |
| Longevity | "Thrasher. Unbelievable. Cabby, **still there** killing it. No problems there" (Sid) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Longevity | "**What is that, (19)80**? Maybe? I don't even know what year that is but by the photo **it could be 2016** and it would be fucking sick. End of story" (Brian) |
| Longevity | "…he also started H-Street I believe; Eric Koston's first sponsor. **Staying power** to modern skateboarding" (Mark) |
| Longevity | "Eddie Elguera's a legit guy, there's no doubt about that. He's **still skating to this day"** (Sid) |
| Longevity | "authenticity to me would be in different stages starting it and **sticking with it** for sure and then being involved in it and being part of the promotion and production of it" (Sid) |
| Longevity | "I personally, as a skateboarder, **wouldn't be very susceptible** to listening to someone's opinion on skateboarding who had very limited knowledge beyond what they had done for research in **the past several months**" (Mark) |
| Longevity | "you gotta understand that people **put in a lot of time** to become authentic in skateboarding **you can't just pick up a board and say 'I'm into skateboarding now**'" (Mikey) |
| Longevity | "I think skateboarding, being a little bit older as a skateboarder, it's got a little bit more to do with **timelessness**" (Brian) |